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NEWS FROM THE DUCHY

THE DUCHY EDITION OF THE TALES AND ROMANCES OF SIR ARTHUR QUILLER-COUCH. "Q"

DEAD MAN'S ROCK. A ROMANCE
THE ASTONISHING HISTORY OF TROY TOWN
NOUGHTS AND CROSSES
THE SPLENDID SPUR
THE DELECTABLE DUCHY
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OLD FIRES AND PROFITABLE GHOSTS
FORT AMITY
I SAW THREE SHIPS AND MORTALLONE
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THE LAIRD'S LUCK AND OTHER FIRESIDE TALES
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THE MAYOR OF TROY
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NEWS FROM THE DUCHY
NICKY-NAN, RESERVIST
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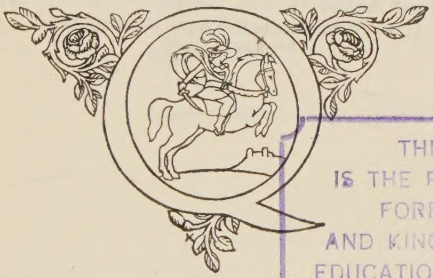
TWO SIDES OF THE FACE
MERRY-GARDEN AND OTHER STORIES

NEWS FROM THE DUCHY

SIR ARTHUR QUILLER-COUCH



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(Two Stories included from *Shakespeare's Christmas*, 1905)

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

TO

MY FRIEND

AUSTIN M. PURVES

OF

PHILADELPHIA

AND

TROY TOWN

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PREFACE

A CELEBRATED writer (now deceased) once visited our Duchy and tried a funny story upon one of its inhabitants without success; whereupon he went home and wrote a chapter on Cornish humour; asserting, on the strength of this experiment, that we had none. As he could not remember the point of his own story, to repeat it, I might answer that a syllogism with its major premiss forgotten can hardly be tested. But I prefer to counter his assertion with a scrap of dialogue which contains less of fun than instruction:

Stranger. Tell me now. Why don't you Cornish really *like* us visitors.

Cornishman. Don't we? . . . Well, if so, maybe 'tis because they put that sort of question.

Well, for my part, the visitor has leave to misunderstand my books so he allow me to misunderstand the generality of him and his ways, his motor-cars and his manners, his suitcase and his pink bungalow. He will grow discontented and pass, having no root. At any rate, my books, though they may not outlast him, have the virtue of not being written for him.

Dear countrymen, whate'er is left to us
Of ancient heritage—
Of manners, speech, of humour, polity,
The limited horizon of our stage—
Old love, hope, fear,

All this I fain would fix upon the page;
That so the coming age,
  Lost in the empire's mass,
Yet haply longing for their fathers, here
  May see as in a glass
What they held dear.

News from the Duchy was first published, 1913, by Messrs. Arrowsmith of Bristol, a stout book from which the initial story "Tom Tiddler's Ground," has been taken and included in volume 6 of this Collected Edition. For some essays which closed that book I have substituted here two stories printed in *Shakespeare's Christmas* (Smith Elder) 1905.

January 1929. Q.

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PART I

PIPES IN ARCADY

I HARDLY can bring myself to part with this story, it has been such a private joy to me. Moreover, that I have lain awake in the night to laugh over it is no guarantee of your being passably amused. Yourselves, I dare say, have known what it is to awake in irrepressible mirth from a dream which next morning proved to be flat and unconvincing. Well, this my pet story has some of the qualities of a dream; being absurd, for instance, and almost incredible, and even a trifle inhuman. After all, I had better change my mind, and tell you another——

But no; I will risk it, and you shall have it, just as it befel.

. . . . .

I had taken an afternoon's holiday to make a pilgrimage: my goal being a small parish church that lies remote from the railway, five good miles from the tiniest of country stations; my purpose to inspect—or say, rather, to contemplate—a Norman porch, for which it ought to be widely famous. (Here let me say that I have an unlearned passion for Norman architecture—to enjoy it merely, not to write about it.)

To carry me on my first stage I had taken a crawling local train that dodged its way somehow between the regular expresses and the "excursions" that invade

our Delectable Duchy from June to October. The season was high midsummer, the afternoon hot and drowsy with scents of mown hay; and between the rattle of the fast trains it seemed that we, native denizens of the Duchy, careless of observation or applause, were executing a *tour de force* in that fine indolence which has been charged as a fault against us. That we halted at every station goes without saying. Few sidings—however inconsiderable or, as it might seem, fortuitous—escaped the flattery of our prolonged sojourn. We ambled, we paused, almost we dallied with the butterflies lazily afloat over the meadow-sweet and cow-parsley beside the line; we exchanged gossip with station-masters, and received the congratulations of signalmen on the extraordinary spell of fine weather. It did not matter. Three market-women, a pedlar, and a local policeman made up with me the train's complement of passengers. I gathered that their business could wait; and as for mine—well, a Norman porch is by this time accustomed to waiting.

I will not deny that in the end I dozed at intervals in my empty smoking compartment; but wish to make it clear that I came on the Vision (as I will call it) with eyes open, and that it left me staring, wide-awake as Macbeth.

Let me describe the scene. To the left of the line as you travel westward there lies a long grassy meadow on a gentle acclivity, set with three or four umbrageous oaks and backed by a steep plantation of oak saplings. At the foot of the meadow, close alongside the line, runs a brook, which is met at the meadow's end by a second brook which crosses under the permanent way through a culvert. The united waters continue the

course of the first brook, beside the line, and maybe for half a mile farther; but, a few yards below their junction, are partly dammed by the masonry of a bridge over which a country lane crosses the railway; and this obstacle spreads them into a pool some fifteen or twenty feet wide, overgrown with the leaves of the arrow-head, and fringed with water-flags and the flowering rush.

Now I seldom pass this spot without sparing a glance for it; first because of the pool's still beauty, and secondly because many rabbits infest the meadow below the coppice, and among them for two or three years was a black fellow whom I took an idle delight in recognising. (He is gone now, and his place knows him no more; yet I continue to hope for sight of a black rabbit just there.) But this afternoon I looked out with special interest because, happening to pass down the line two days before, I had noted a gang of navvies at work on the culvert; and among them, as they stood aside to let the train pass, I had recognised my friend Joby Tucker, their ganger, and an excellent fellow to boot.

Therefore my eyes were alert as we approached the curve that opens the meadow into view, and—as I am a Christian man, living in the twentieth century—I saw this Vision: I beheld beneath the shade of the midmost oak eight men sitting stark naked, whereof one blew on a flute, one played a concertina, and the rest beat their palms together, marking the time; while before them, in couples on the sward, my gang of navvies rotated in a clumsy waltz watched by a ring of solemn ruminant kine!

I saw it. The whole scene, barring the concertina

and the navvies' clothes, might have been transformed straight from a Greek vase of the best period. Here, in this green corner of rural England on a workaday afternoon (a Wednesday, to be precise), in full sunlight, I saw this company of the early gods sitting, naked and unabashed, and piping, while twelve British navvies danced to their music. . . . I saw it; and a derisive whistle from the engine told me that driver and stoker saw it too. I was not dreaming, then. But what on earth could it mean? For fifteen seconds or so I stared at the Vision . . . and so the train joggled past it and rapt it from my eyes.

I can understand now the ancient stories of men who, having by hap surprised the goddesses bathing, never recovered from the shock but thereafter ran wild in the woods with their memories.

At the next station I alighted. It chanced to be the station for which I had taken my ticket; but anyhow I should have alighted there. The spell of the vision was upon me. The Norman porch might wait. It is (as I have said) used to waiting, and in fact it has waited. I have not yet made another holiday to visit it. Whether or no the market-women and the local policeman had beheld, I know not. I hope not, but now shall never know. . . . The engine-driver, leaning in converse with the station-master, and jerking a thumb backward, had certainly beheld. But I passed him with averted eyes, gave up my ticket, and struck straight across country for the spot.

I came to it, as my watch told me, at twenty minutes after five. The afternoon sunlight still lay broad on the meadow. The place was unchanged save for a lengthening of its oak-tree shadows. But the persons

of my Vision—naked gods and navvies—had vanished. Only the cattle stood, knee-deep in the pool, lazily swishing their tails in protest against the flies; and the cattle could tell me nothing.

. . . . .

Just a fortnight later, as I spent at St. Blazey junction the forty odd minutes of repentance ever thoughtfully provided by our railway company for those who, living in Troy, are foolish enough to travel, I spied at some distance below the station a gang of men engaged in unloading rubble to construct a new siding for the clay-traffic, and at their head my friend Mr. Joby Tucker. The railway company was consuming so much of my time that I felt no qualms in returning some part of the compliment, and strolled down the line to wish Mr. Tucker good day. "And, by the bye," I added, "you owe me an explanation. What on earth were you doing in Treba meadow two Wednesdays ago—you and your naked friends?"

Joby leaned on his measuring rod and grinned from ear to ear.

"You see'd us?" he asked, and, letting his eyes travel along the line, he chuckled to himself softly and at length. "Well, now, I'm glad o' that. 'Fact is, I've been savin' up to tell 'ee about it, but (thinks I) when I tells Mr. Q. he won't never believe."

"I certainly saw you," I answered; "but as for believing——"

"Iss, iss," he interrupted, with fresh chucklings; "a fair knock-out, wasn' it? . . . You see, they was blind—poor fellas!"

"Drunk?"

"No, sir—blind—'pity the pore blind'; three-parts blind, anyways, an' undergoin' treatment for it."

"Nice sort of treatment!"

"Eh? You don't understand. See'd us from the train, did 'ee? Which train?"

"The 1.35 ex Millbay."

"Wish I'd a-knowed you was watchin' us. I'd ha' waved my hat as you went by, or maybe blawed 'ee a kiss—that bein' properer to the occasion, come to think."

Joby paused, drew the back of a hand across his laughter-moistened eyes, and pulled himself together, steadying his voice for the story.

. . . . .

"I'll tell 'ee what happened, from the beginnin'. A gang of us had been sent down, two days before, to Treba meadow, to repair the culvert there. Soon as we started to work we found the whole masonry fairly rotten, and spent the first afternoon (that was Monday) underpinnin', while I traced out the extent o' the damage. The farther I went, the worse I found it; the main mischief bein' a leak about midway in the culvert, on the down side; whereby the water, perc'latin' through, was unpackin' the soil, not only behind the masonry of the culvert, but right away down for twenty yards and more behind the stone-facing where the line runs alongside the pool. All this we were forced to take down, shorein' as we went, till we cut back pretty close to the rails. The job, you see, had turned out more serious than reported; and havin' no one to consult, I kept the men at it.

"By Wednesday noon we had cut back so far as we needed, shorein' very careful as we went, and the men

workin' away cheerful, with the footboards of the expresses whizzin' by close over their heads, so's it felt like havin' your hair brushed by machinery. By the time we knocked off for dinner I felt pretty easy in mind, knowin' we'd broke the back o' the job.

"Well, we touched pipe and started again. Bein' so close to the line I'd posted a fella with a flag—Bill Martin it was—to keep a look out for the down-trains; an' about three o'clock or a little after he whistled one comin'. I happened to be in the culvert at the time, but stepped out an' back across the brook, just to fling an eye along the embankment to see that all was clear. Clear it was, an' therefore it surprised me a bit, as the train hove in sight around the curve, to see that she had her brakes on, hard, and was slowin' down to stop. My first thought was that Bill Martin must have taken some scare an' showed her the red flag. But that was a mistake; besides she must have started the brakes before openin' sight on Bill."

"Then why on earth was she pulling up?" I asked. "It couldn't be signals."

"There ain't no signal within a mile of Treba meadow, up or down. She was stoppin' because—but just you let me tell it in my own way. Along she came, draggin' hard on her brakes an' whistlin'. I knew her for an excursion, and as she passed I sized it up for a big school-treat. There was five coaches, mostly packed with children, an' on one o' the coaches was a board—'Exeter to Penzance.' The four front coaches had corridors, the tail one just ord'nary compartments.

"Well, she dragged past us to dead-slow, an' came to a standstill with her tail coach about thirty yards beyond where I stood, and, as you might say, with its

footboard right overhangin' the pool. You mayn't remember it, but the line just there curves pretty sharp to the right, and when she pulled up, the tail coach pretty well hid the rest o' the train from us. Five or six men, hearin' the brakes, had followed me out of the culvert and stood by me, wonderin' why the stoppage was. The rest were dotted about along the slope of th' embankment. And then the curiousest thing happened—about the curiousest thing I seen in all my years on the line. A door of the tail coach opened and a man stepped out. He didn't jump out, you understand, nor fling hisself out; he just stepped out into air, and with that his arms and legs cast themselves anyways an' he went down sprawlin' into the pool. It's easy to say we ought t' have run then an' there an' rescued him; but for the moment it stuck us up starin' an',—Wait a bit! You han't heard the end.

"I hadn't fairly caught my breath, before another man stepped out! He put his foot down upon nothing, same as the first, overbalanced just the same, and shot after him base-over-top into the water.

"Close 'pon the second man's heels appeared a third. . . . Yes, sir, I know now what a woman feels like when she's goin' to have the scritches.[1] I'd have asked someone to pinch me in the fleshy part o' the leg, to make sure I was alive an' awake, but the power o' speech was taken from us. We just stuck an' stared.

"What beat everything was the behaviour of the train, so to say. There it stood, like as if it'd pulled up alongside the pool for the very purpose to unload these unfort'nit' men; an' yet takin' no notice whatever. Not a sign o' the guard—not a head poked out any-

[1] Hysterics.

wheres in the line o' windows—only the sun shinin', an' the steam escapin', an' out o' the rear compartment this procession droppin' out an' high-divin' one after another.

"Eight of 'em! Eight, as I am a truth-speakin' man—but there! you saw 'em with your own eyes. Eight! and the last of the eight scarce in the water afore the engine toots her whistle an' the train starts on again, round the curve an' out o' sight.

"She didn' leave us no time to doubt, neither, for there the poor fellas were, splashin' an' blowin', some of 'em bleatin' for help, an' gurglin', an' for aught we know drownin' in three-to-four feet o' water. So we pulled ourselves together an' ran to give 'em first aid.

"It didn' take us long to haul the whole lot out and ashore; and, as Providence would have it, not a bone broken in the party. One or two were sufferin' from sprains, and all of 'em from shock (but so were we, for that matter), and between 'em they must ha' swallowed a bra' few pints o' water, an' muddy water at that. I can't tell ezackly when or how we discovered they was all blind, or near-upon blind. It may ha' been from the unhandiness of their movements an' the way they clutched at us an' at one another as we pulled 'em ashore. Hows'ever, blind they were; an' I don't remember that it struck us as anyways singular, after what we'd been through a'ready. We fished out a concertina, too, an' a silver-mounted flute that was bobbin' among the weeds.

"The man the concertina belonged to—a tall fresh-complexioned young fella he was, an' very mild of manner—turned out to be a sort o' leader o' the party; an' he was the first to talk any sense. 'Th-thank you,' he said. 'They told us Penzance was the next stop.'

"'Hey?' says I.

"'They told us,' he says again, plaintive-like, feelin' for his spectacles an' not finding 'em, 'that Penzance was the next stop.'

"'Bound for Penzance, was you?' I asks.

"'For the Land's End,' says he, his teeth chatterin'. I set it down the man had a stammer, but 'twas only the shock an' the chill of his duckin'.

"'Well,' says I, 'this ain't the Land's End, though I dessay it feels a bit like it. Then you wasn' *thrown* out?' I says.

"'Th-thrown out?' says he. 'N-no. They told us Penzance was the next stop.'

"'Then,' says I, 'if you got out accidental you've had a most providential escape, an' me an' my mates don't deserve less than to hear about it. There's bound to be inquiries after you when the guard finds your compartment empty an' the door open. May be the train'll put back; more likely they'll send a search-party; but anyways you're all wet through, an' the best thing for health is to off wi' your clothes an' dry 'em, this warm afternoon.'

"'I dessay,' says he, 'you'll have noticed that our eyesight is affected.'

"'All the better if you're anyways modest,' says I. 'You couldn' find a retirededer place than this—not if you searched: an' *we* don't mind.'

"Well, sir, the end was we stripped 'em naked as Adam, an' spread their clothes to dry 'pon the grass. While we tended on 'em the mild young man told us how it had happened. It seems they'd come by excursion from Exeter. There's a blind home at Exeter, an' likewise a cathedral choir, an' Sunday school, an'

a boys' brigade, with other sundries; an' this year the good people financin' half a dozen o' these shows had discovered that by clubbin' two sixpences together a shillin' could be made to go as far as eighteenpence; and how, doin' it on the co-op, instead of an afternoon treat for each, they could manage a two days' outin' for all—Exeter to Penzance an' the Land's End, sleepin' one night at Penzance, an' back to Exeter at some ungodly hour the next. It's no use your askin' me why a man three-parts blind should want to visit the Land's End. There's an attraction about that place, an' that's all you can say. Everybody knows as 'tisn' worth seein', an' yet everybody wants to see it. So why not a blind man?

"Well, this Happy Holiday Committee (as they called themselves) got the Company to fix them up with a special excursion; an' our blind friends—bein' sensitive, or maybe a touch above mixin' wi' the schoolchildren an' infants—had packed themselves into this rear compartment separate from the others. One of 'em had brought his concertina, an' another his flute, and what with these an' other ways of passin' the time they got along pretty comfortable till they came to Gwinear Road: an' there for some reason they were held up an' had to show their tickets. Anyways, the staff at Gwinear Road went along the train collectin' the halves o' their return tickets. 'What's the name o' this station?' asks my blind friend, very mild an' polite. 'Gwinear Road,' answers the porter; 'Penzance next stop.' Somehow this gave him the notion that they were nearly arrived, an' so, you see, when the train slowed down a few minutes later an' came to a stop, he took the porter at his word, an' stepped out. Simple,

wasn't it? But in my experience the curiousest things in life are the simplest of all, once you come to inquire into 'em."

"What I don't understand," said I, "is how the train came to stop just there."

Mr. Tucker gazed at me rather in sorrow than in anger. "I thought," said he, "'twas agreed I should tell the story in my own way. Well, as I was saying, we got those poor fellas there, all as naked as Adam, an' we was helpin' them all we could—some of us wringin' out their underlinen an' spreading it to dry, others collectin' their hats, an' tryin' which fitted which, an' others even dredgin' the pool for their handbags an' spectacles an' other small articles, an' in the middle of it someone started to laugh. You'll scarce believe it, but up to that moment there hadn't been so much as a smile to hand round; an' to this day I don't know the man's name that started it—for all I can tell you, I did it myself. But this I do know, that it set off the whole gang like a motor-engine. There was a sort of 'click,' an' the next moment——

"Laugh? I never heard men laugh like it in my born days. Sort of recoil, I s'pose it must ha' been, after the shock. Laugh? There was men staggerin' drunk with it and there was men rollin' on the turf with it; an' there was men cryin' with it, holdin' on to a stitch in their sides an' beseechin' everyone also to hold hard. The blind men took a bit longer to get going; but by gosh, sir! once started they laughed to do your heart good. O Lord, O Lord! I wish you could ha' see that mild-mannered spokesman. Somebody had fished out his spectacles for en, and that was all the clothing he stood in—that, an' a grin. He fairly

beamed; an' the more he beamed the more we rocked, callin' on en to take pity an' stop it.

"Soon as I could catch a bit o' breath, 'Land's End next stop!' gasped I. 'O, but this *is* the Land's End! This is what the Land's End oughter been all the time, an' never was yet. O, for the Lord's sake,' says I, 'stop beamin', and pick up your concertina an' pitch us a tune!'

"Well, he did too. He played us 'Home, sweet home' first of all—'mid pleasure an' palaces—an' the rest o' the young men sat around en an' started clappin' their hands to the tune; an' then some fool slipped an arm round my waist. I'm only thankful he didn't kiss me. Didn't think of it, perhaps; couldn't ha' been that he wasn't capable. It must ha' been just then your train came along. An' about twenty minutes later, when we was gettin' our friends back into their outfits, we heard the search-engine about half a mile below, whistlin' an' feelin' its way up very cautious towards us.

"They was sun-dried an' jolly as sandhoppers—all their eight of 'em—as we helped 'em on board an' wished 'em ta-ta! The search-party couldn' understand at all what had happened—in so short a time, too—to make us so cordial; an' somehow we didn' explain—neither we nor the blind men. I reckon the whole business had been so loonatic we felt it kind of holy. But the pore fellas kept wavin' back to us as they went out o' sight around the curve, an' maybe for a mile beyond. I never heard," Mr. Tucker wound up meditatively, "if they ever reached the Land's End. I wonder?"

"But, excuse me once more," said I. "How came the train to stop as it did?"

"To be sure. I said just now that the curiousest things in life were, gen'rally speakin', the simplest. One o' the schoolchildren in the fore part of the train —a small nipper of nine—had put his head out o' the carriage window and got his cap blown away. That's all. Bein' a nipper of some resource, he wasted no time, but touched off the communicatin' button an' fetched the whole train to a standstill. George Simmons, the guard, told me all about it last week, when I happened across him an' asked the same question you've been askin'. George was huntin' through the corridors to find out what had gone wrong; that's how the blind men stepped out without his noticin'. He pretended to be pretty angry wi' the young tacker. 'Do 'ee know,' says George, 'it's a five pound fine if you stop a train without good reason?' 'But I *had* a good reason,' says the child. 'My mother gave 'levenpence for that cap, an' 'tis a bran' new one.'"

OUR LADY OF GWITHIAN

"Mary, mother, well thou be!
Mary, mother, think on me;
Sweetè Lady, maiden clean,
Shield me from ill, shame, and teen;
Shield me, Lady, from villainy
And from all wicked company!"

SPECULUM CHRISTIANI.

HERE is a little story I found one day among the legends of the Cornish Saints, like a chip in porridge. If you love simplicity, I think it may amuse you.

Lovey Bussow was wife of Daniel Bussow, a tin-streamer of Gwithian Parish. He had brought her from Camborne, and her neighbours agreed that there was little amiss with the woman if you overlooked her being a bit weak in the head. They set her down as "not exactly." At the end of a year she brought her husband a fine boy. It happened that the child was born just about the time of year the tin-merchants visited St. Michael's Mount; and the father—who streamed in a small way, and had no beast of burden but his donkey, or "naggur"—had to load up panniers and drive his tin down to the shore-market with the rest, which for him meant an absence of three weeks, or a fortnight at the least.

So Daniel kissed his wife and took his leave; and the neighbours, who came to visit her as soon as he was out of the way, all told her the same story—that until

the child was safely baptised it behoved her to be very careful and keep her door shut for fear of the Piskies. The Piskies, or fairy-folk (they said), were themselves the spirits of children that had died unchristened, and liked nothing better than the chance to steal away an unchristened child to join their nation of mischief.

Lovey listened to them, and it preyed on her mind. She reckoned that her best course was to fetch a holy man as quickly as possible to baptise the child and make the cross over him. So one afternoon, the mite being then a bare fortnight old, she left him asleep in his cradle and, wrapping a shawl over her head, hurried off to seek Meriden the Priest.

Meriden the Priest dwelt in a hut among the sand-hills, a bowshot beyond St. Gwithian's Chapel on the seaward side, as you go out to Godrevy. He had spent the day in barking his nets, and was spreading them out to dry on the short turf of the towans; but on hearing Lovey's errand, he good-naturedly dropped his occupation and, staying only to fill a bottle with holy water, walked back with her to her home.

As they drew near, Lovey was somewhat perturbed to see that the door, which she had carefully closed, was standing wide open. She guessed, however, that a neighbour had called in her absence, and would be inside keeping watch over the child. As she reached the threshold, the dreadful truth broke upon her: the kitchen was empty, and so was the cradle!

It made her frantic for a while. Meriden the Priest offered what consolation he could, and suggested that one of her neighbours had called indeed, and finding the baby alone in the cottage, had taken it off to her own home to guard it. But this he felt to be a forlorn

hope, and it proved a vain one. Neither search nor inquiry could trace the infant. Beyond a doubt the Piskies had carried him off.

When this was established so that even the hopefullest of the good-wives shook her head over it, Lovey grew calm of a sudden and (as it seemed) with the calm of despair. She grew obstinate too.

"My blessed cheeld!" she kept repeating. "The tender worm of 'en! But I'll have 'en back, if I've to go to the naughty place to fetch 'en. Why, what sort of a tale be I to pitch to my Dan'l, if he comes home and his firstborn gone?"

They shook their heads again over this. It would be a brave blow for the man, but (said one to another) he that marries a fool must look for thorns in his bed.

"What's done can't be undone," they told her. "You'd best let a two-three of us stay the night and coax 'ee from frettin'. It's bad for the system, and you so soon over child-birth."

Lovey opened her eyes wide on them.

"Lord's sake!" she said, "you don't reckon I'm goin' to sit down under this? What?—and him the beautifullest, straightest cheeld that ever was in Gwithian Parish! Go'st thy ways home, every wan. Piskies steal my cheeld an' Dan'l's, would they? I'll pisky 'em!"

She showed them forth—"put them to doors" as we say in the Duchy—every one, the Priest included. She would have none of their consolation.

"You mean it kindly, naybors, I don't say; but tiddn' what I happen to want. I wants my cheeld back; an' I'll *have'n* back, what's more!"

They went their ways, agreeing that the woman was doited. Lovey closed the door upon them, bolted it,

and sat for hours staring at the empty cradle. Through the unglazed window she could see the stars; and when these told her that midnight was near, she put on her shawl again, drew the bolt, and fared forth over the towans. At first the stars guided her, and the slant of the night-wind on her face; but by and by, in a dip between the hills, she spied her mark and steered for it. This was the spark within St. Gwithian's Chapel, where day and night a tiny oil lamp, with a floating wick, burned before the image of Our Lady.

Meriden the Priest kept the lamp filled, the wick trimmed, year in and year out. But he, good man, after remembering Lovey in his prayers, was laid asleep and snoring within his hut, a bowshot away. The chapel-door opened softly to Lovey's hand, and she crept up to Mary's image, and abased herself before it.

"Dear Aun' Mary," she whispered, "the Piskies have taken my cheeld! You d'knaw what that means to a poor female—you there, cuddlin' your liddle Jesus in the crook o' your arm. An' you d'knaw likewise what these Piskies be like; spiteful li'l toads, same as you or I might be if happen we'd died unchristened an' hadn' no share in heaven nor hell nor middle-earth. But that's no excuse. Aun' Mary, my dear, I want my cheeld back!" said she. That was all Lovey prayed. Without more ado she bobbed a curtsy, crept from the chapel, closed the door, and way-to-go back to her cottage.

When she reached it and struck a light in the kitchen she more than half expected to hear the child cry to her from his cradle. But, for all that Meriden the Priest had told her concerning the Virgin and her power, there the cradle stood empty.

"Well-a-well!" breathed Lovey. "The gentry are not to be hurried, I reckon. I'll fit and lie down for forty winks," she said; "though I do think, with her experience Mary might have remembered the poor mite would be famished afore this, not to mention that the milk in me is beginnin' to hurt cruel."

She did off some of her clothes and lay down, and even slept a little in spite of the pain in her breasts; but awoke a good two hours before dawn, to find no baby restored to her arms, nor even (when she looked) was it back in its cradle.

"This'll never do," said Lovey. On went her shawl again, and once again she faced the night and hurried across the towans to St. Gwithian's Chapel. There in her niche stood Our Lady, quite as though nothing had happened, with the infant Christ in her arms and the tiny lamp burning at her feet.

"Aun' Mary, Aun' Mary," said Lovey, speaking up sharp, "this iddn' no sense 't all! A person would think time was no objic, the way you stick there starin', an' my poor cheeld leary with hunger afore now—as you, bein' a mother, oft to knaw. Fit an' fetch 'en home to me quick. Aw, do'ee co', that's a dear soul!"

But Our Lady stood there and made no sign.

"I don't understand 'ee 't all," Lovey groaned. "'Tiddn' the way I'd behave in your place, and you d'knaw it."

Still Our Lady made no sign.

Lovey grew desperate.

"Aw, very well, then!" she cried. "Try what it feels like without your liddle Jesus!"

And reaching up a hand, she snatched at and lifted the Holy Child that fitted into a stone socket on Our

Lady's arm. It came away in her grasp, and she fled, tucking it under her shawl.

All the way home Lovey looked for the earth to gape and swallow her, or a hand to reach down from heaven and grip her by the hair; and all the way she seemed to hear Our Lady's feet padding after her in the darkness. But she never stopped nor stayed until she reached home; and there, flinging in through the door and slamming to the bolt behind her, she made one spring for the bed, and slid down in it, cowering over the small stone image.

Rat-a-tat! tat!—someone knocked on the door so that the cottage shook.

"Knock away!" said Lovey. "Whoever thee be, thee 'rt not my cheeld."

Rat-a-tat! tat!

"My cheeld wouldn' be knockin': he's got neither strength nor sproil for it. An' you may fetch Michael and all his Angels, to tear me in pieces," said Lovey; "but till I hear my own cheeld creen to me, I'll keep what I have!"

Thereupon Lovey sat up, listening. For outside she heard a feeble wail.

She slipped out of bed. Holding the image tight in her right arm, she drew the bolt cautiously. On the threshold at her feet, lay her own babe, nestling in a bed of bracken.

She would have stooped at once and snatched him to her. But the stone Christling hampered her, lying so heavily in her arm. For a moment, fearing trickery, she had a mind to hurl it far out of doors into the night. . . . It would fall without much hurt into the soft sand of the towans. But on a second thought she held it forth gently in her two hands.

"I never meant to hurt 'en, Aun' Mary," she said. "But a firstborn's a firstborn, be we gentle or simple."

In the darkness a pair of invisible hands reached forward and took her hostage.

* * * * *

When it was known that the Piskies had repented and restored Lovey Bussow's child to her, the neighbours agreed that fools have most of the luck in this world; but came nevertheless to offer their congratulations. Meriden the Priest came also. He wanted to know how it had happened; for the Piskies do not easily surrender a child they have stolen.

Lovey—standing very demure, and smoothing her apron down along her thighs—confessed that she had laid her trouble before Our Lady.

"A miracle, then!" exclaimed his Reverence. "What height! What depth!"

"That's of it," agreed Lovey. "Aw, b'lieve me, your Reverence, we mothers understand wan another."

PILOT MATTHEY'S CHRISTMAS

PILOT MATTHEY came down to the little fishing-quay at five p.m. or thereabouts. He is an elderly man, tall and sizable, with a grizzled beard and eyes innocent-tender as a child's, but set in deep crow's-feet at the corners, as all seamen's eyes are. It comes of facing the wind.

Pilot Matthey spent the fore-half of his life at the fishing. Thence he won his way to be a Trinity pilot, and wears such portions of an old uniform as he remembers to don. He has six sons and four daughters, all brought up in the fear of the Lord, and is very much of a prophet in our Israel. One of the sons works with him as apprentice, the other five follow the fishing.

He came down to the quay soon after tea-time, about half an hour before the luggers were due to put out. Some twenty-five or thirty men were already gathered, dandering to and fro with hands in pockets, or seated on the bench under the sea wall, waiting for the tide to serve. About an equal number were below in the boats, getting things ready.

There was nothing unusual about Matthey, save that, although it was a warm evening in August, he wore a thick pea-jacket, and had turned the collar up about his ears. Nor (if you know Cornish fishermen) was

there anything very unusual in what he did, albeit a stranger might well have thought it frantic.

For some time he walked to and fro, threading his way in and out of the groups of men, walking much faster than they—at the best they were strolling—muttering the while with his head sunk low in his jacket collar, turning sharply when he reached the edge of the quay, or pausing a moment or two, and staring gloomily at the water. The men watched him, yet not very curiously. They knew what was coming.

Of a sudden he halted and began to preach. He preached of Redemption from Sin, of the Blood of the Lamb, of the ineffable bliss of Salvation. His voice rose in an agony on the gentle twilight: it could be heard—entreating, invoking, persuading, wrestling—far across the harbour. The men listened quite attentively until the time came for getting aboard. Then they stole away by twos and threes down the quay steps. Meanwhile, and all the while, preparations on the boats had been going forward.

He was left alone at length. Even the children had lost interest in him, and had run off to watch the boats as they crept out on the tide. He ceased abruptly, came across to the bench where I sat smoking my pipe, and dropped exhausted beside me. The fire had died out of him. He eyed me almost shamefacedly at first, by and by more boldly.

"I would give, sir," said Pilot Matthey, "I would give half my worldly goods to lead you to the Lord."

"I believe you," said I. "To my knowledge you have often risked more than that—your life—to save men from drowning. But tell me—you that for twenty minutes have been telling these fellows how Christ

feels towards them—how can you know? It is hard enough, surely, to get inside any man's feelings. How can you pretend to know what Christ feels, or felt—for an instance, in the Judgment Hall, when Peter denied?"

"Once I did, sir," said Pilot Matthey, smoothing the worn knees of his trousers. "It was just that. I'll tell you:

"It happened eighteen or twenty years ago, on the old *Early and Late*—yes, twenty years come Christmas, for I mind that my eldest daughter was expectin' her first man-child, just then. You saw him get aboard just now, praise the Lord! But at the time we was all nervous about it—my son-in-law, Daniel, bein' away with me on the East Coast after the herrings. I'd as good as promised him to be back in time for it—this bein' my first grandchild, an' due (so well as we could calculate) any time between Christmas an' New Year. Well, there was no sacrifice, as it happened, in startin' for home—the weather up there keepin' monstrous, an' the catches not worth the labour. So we turned down Channel, the wind strong an' dead foul—south at first, then west-sou'-west—headin' us all the way, and always blowin' from just where 'twasn't wanted. This lasted us down to the Wight, and we'd most given up hope to see home before Christmas, when almost without warnin' it catched in off the land—pretty fresh still, but steady—and bowled us down past the Bill and half-way across to the Start, merry as heart's delight. Then it fell away again, almost to a flat calm, and Daniel lost his temper. I never allowed cursin' on board the *Early and Late*—nor, for that matter, on any other boat of

mine; but if Daniel didn't swear a bit out of hearin', well then—poor dear fellow, he's dead and gone these twelve years (yes, sir—drowned)—well then I'm doin' him an injustice. One couldn't help pitying him, neither. Didn't I know well enough what it felt like? And the awe of it, to think it's happenin' everywhere, and ever since world began—men fretting for the wife and firstborn, and gettin' over it, and goin' down to the grave leavin' the firstborn to fret over *his* firstborn! It puts me in mind o' the old hemn, sir: 'tis in the Wesley books, and I can't think why church folk leave out the verse—

> "The busy tribes o' flesh and blood,
> With all their cares and fears—

Ay, 'cares and fears'; that's of it—

> "Are carried downward by the flood,
> And lost in followin' years.

"Poor Daniel—poor boy!"

Pilot Matthey sat silent for a while, staring out over the water in the wake of the boats that already had begun to melt into the shadow of darkness.

"'Twas beautiful sunshiny weather, too, as I mind," he resumed. "One o' those calm spells that happen, as often as not, just about Christmas. I remember drawin' your attention to it, sir, one Christmas when I passed you the compliments of the season; and you put it down to kingfishers, which I thought strange at the time."

"Kingfishers?" echoed I, mystified for the moment. "Oh, yes"—as light broke on me—"Halcyon days, of course!"

"That's right," Pilot Matthey nodded. "That's what you called 'em. . . . It took us a whole day to work past the tides of the Start. Then, about sunset, a light draught off the land helped us to Bolt Tail, and after that we mostly drifted all night, with here and there a cat's-paw, down across Bigbury Bay. By five in the morning we were inside the Eddystone, with Plymouth Sound open, and by twelve noon we was just in the very same place. It was Christmas Eve, sir.

"I looked at Daniel's face, and then a notion struck me. It was foolish I hadn't thought of it before.

"'See here, boys,' I says. (There was three. My second son, Sam, Daniel, and Daniel's brother, Dick, a youngster of sixteen or so.) 'Get out the boat,' I says, 'and we'll tow her into Plymouth. If you're smart we may pluck her into Cattewater in time for Daniel to catch a train home. Sam can go home, too, if he has a mind, and the youngster can stay and help me look after things. I've seen a many Christmasses,' said I, 'and I'd as lief spend this one at Plymouth as anywhere else. You can give 'em all my love, and turn up again the day after Boxin' Day—and mind you ask for excursion tickets,' I said.

"They tumbled the boat out fast enough, you may be sure. Leastways the two men were smart enough. But the boy seemed ready to cry, so that my heart smote me. 'There!' said I, 'and Dicky can go too, if he'll pull for it. I shan't mind bein' left to myself. A redeemed man's never lonely—least of all at Christmas time.'

"Well, sir, they nipped into the boat, leavin' me aboard to steer; and they pulled—pulled—like as if they'd pull their hearts out. But it happened a strongish

tide was settin' out o' the Sound, and long before we fetched past the breakwater I saw there was no chance to make Cattewater before nightfall, let alone their gettin' to the railway station. I blamed myself that I hadn't thought of it earlier, and so, steppin' forward, I called out to them to ease up—we wouldn't struggle on for Cattewater, but drop hook in Jennycliff Bay, somewhere inside of the Merchant Shipping anchorage. As things were, this would save a good hour—more likely two hours. 'And,' said I, 'you can take the boat, all three, and leave her at Barbican steps. Tell the harbour-master where she belongs, and where I'm laying. He'll see she don't take no harm, and you needn't fear but I'll get put ashore to her somehow. There's always somebody passin' hereabouts.'

"'But look 'ee here, father,' said the boys—good boys they were, too—'What's to happen if it comes on to blow from south or sou'-west, same as it blew at the beginning of the week?'

"'Tisn't goin' to do any such thing,' said I, for I'd been studyin' the weather. 'And, even if it should happen, I've signals aboard. 'Tisn't the first time, sonnies, I've sat out a week-end on board a boat, alone wi' the Redeemer.'

"That settled it, sir. It relieved 'em a bit, too, when they spied another lugger already lyin' inside the anchorage, and made her out for a Porthleven boat, the *Maid in Two Minds*, that had been after the herrings with the rest of us up to a fortni't ago, or maybe three weeks: since when we hadn't seen her. As I told you, the weather had been cruel, and the catches next to nothing; and belike she'd given it up earlier than we and pushed for home. At any rate, here she was. We

knowed her owners, as fishermen do; but we'd never passed word with her, nor with any of her crew. I'd heard somewhere—but where I couldn't recollect—that the skipper was a blasphemous man, given to the drink, and passed by the name of Dog Mitchell; but 'twas hearsay only. All I noted, or had a mind to note, as we dropped anchor less than a cable length from her, was that she had no boat astern or on deck (by which I concluded the crew were ashore), and that Dog Mitchell himself was on deck. I reckernised him through the glass. He made no hail at all, but stood leanin' by the mizen and smokin', watchin' what we did. By then the dark was comin' down.

"Well, sir, I looked at my watch, and there was no time to be choice about position; no time even for the lads to get aboard and pack their bags. I ran forward, heaved anchor, cast off tow-line, an' just ran below, and came up with an armful o' duds which I tossed into the boat as she dropped back alongside. I fished the purse out of my pocket, and two sovereigns out o' the purse. 'That'll take 'ee home and back,' said I, passin' the money to Daniel. 'So long, children! You haven't no time to spare.'

"Away they pulled, callin' back, 'God bless 'ee, father!' and the like; words I shan't forget. . . . Poor Daniel! . . . And there, all of a sudden, was I, left to spend Christmas alone: which didn't trouble me at all.

"'Stead o' which, as you might say, havin' downed sail and made things pretty well shipshape on deck, I went below and trimmed and lit the riding light. When I came on deck with it the *Maid in Two Minds* was still in darkness. 'That's queer,' thought I; but maybe the *Early and Late's* light reminded Dog Mitchell

of his, for a few minutes later he fetched it up and made it fast, takin' an uncommon long time over the job and mutterin' to himself all the while. (For I should tell you that, the weather bein' so still and the distance not a hundred yards, I could hear every word.)

"'Twas then, I think, it first came into my mind that the man was drunk, and five minutes later I was sure of it: for on his way aft he caught his foot and tripped over something—one o' the deck-leads maybe—and the words he ripped out 'twould turn me cold to repeat. His voice was thick, too, and after cursin' away for half a minute it dropped to a sort of growl, same as you'll hear a man use when he's full o' drink and reckons he has a grudge against somebody or something—he doesn't quite know which, or what. Thought I, ''Tis a risky game o' those others to leave a poor chap alone in that state. He might catch the boat afire, for one thing: and, for another, he might fall overboard.' It crossed my mind, too, that if he fell overboard I hadn't a boat to pull for him.

"He went below after that, and for a couple of hours no sound came from the *Maid in Two Minds*. 'Likely enough,' thought I, 'he's turned in, to sleep it off; and that's the best could happen to him'; and by and by I put the poor fellow clean out o' my head. I made myself a dish o' tea, got out supper, and ate it with a thankful heart, though I missed the boys; but, then again, I no sooner missed them than I praised God they had caught the train. They would be nearin' home by this time; and I sat for a while picturin' it: the kitchen, and the women-folk there, that must have made up their minds to spend Christmas without us; particularly Lisbeth Mary—that's my daughter, Daniel's

wife—with her mother to comfort her, an' the firelight goin' dinky-dink round the cups and saucers on the dresser. I pictured the joy of it, too, when Sam or Daniel struck rat-tat and clicked open the latch, or maybe one o' the gals pricked up an ear at the sound of their boots on the cobbles. I 'most hoped the lads hadn't been thoughtful enough to send on a telegram. My mind ran on all this, sir; and then for a moment it ran back to myself, sittin' there cosy and snug after many perils, many joys; past middle-age, yet hale and strong, wi' the hand o' the Lord protectin' me. 'The Lord is my shepherd; therefore can I lack nothing. He shall feed me in a green pasture, and lead me forth beside the waters of comfort. He shall convert my soul . . .'

"I don't know how it happened, sir, but of a sudden a well o' warmth ran through me and all over me, just like a spring burstin'. 'Waters o' Comfort?' Ay, maybe . . . maybe. Funny things happen on Christmas Eve, they say. My old mother believed to her last day that every Christmas Eve at midnight the cattle in their challs went down on their knees, throughout the land . . .

"But the feelin', if you understand me, wasn't Christmas-like at all. It had started with green pastures: and green pastures ran in my head, with brooks, and birds singin' away up aloft and bees hummin' all 'round, and the sunshine o' the Lord warmin' everything and warmin' my heart . . . I felt the walls of the cuddy chokin' me of a sudden, an' went on deck.

"A fine night it was, up there. Very clear with a hint o' frost—no moon. As I remember, she was in her first quarter and had gone down some while. The

tide had turned and was makin' in steady. I could hear it clap-clappin' past the *Maid in Two Minds*—she lay a little outside of us, to seaward, and we had swung so that her ridin' light come over our starboard bow. Out beyond her the lighthouse on the breakwater kept flashin'—it's red over the anchorage—an' away beyond that the 'Stone. Astern was all the half-circle o' Plymouth lights—like the front of a crown o' glory. And the stars overhead, sir!—not so much as a wisp o' cloud to hide 'em.

"'Where is He that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen His star in the east . . .' I'd always been curious about that star, sir,—whether 'twas an ordinary one or one sent by miracle: and, years before, I'd argued it out that the Lord wouldn't send one like a flash in the pan, but—bein' thoughtful in all things—would leave it to come back constant every year and bring assurance, if ye looked for it. After that, I began to look regularly, studying the sky from the first week of December on to Christmas: and 'twasn't long before I felt certain. 'Tis a star—they call it Regulus in the books, for I've looked it out—that gets up in the south-east in December month: pretty low, and yet full high enough to stand over a cottage; one o' the brightest too, and easily known, for it carries five other stars set like a reap-hook just above it.

"Well, I looked to the south-east, and there my star stood blazin', just over the dark o' the land, with its reap-hook over its forehead. 'The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light . . .'

"While I stood staring at it, thinkin' my thoughts, there came a noise all of a sudden from the other lugger, as if someone had kicked over a table down below, and

upset half a dozen pots and pans. Then, almost before I had time to wonder, I heard Dog Mitchell scramble forth on deck, find his feet in a scrufflin' way, and start travisin' forth and back, forth and back, talkin' to himself all the while and cursin'. He was fairly chewin' curses. I guessed what was the matter. He had been down below toppin' things up with a last soak of neat whisky, and now he had the shakes on him, or the beginnings of 'em.

"You know the sayin', 'A fisherman's walk—two steps, an' overboard'? . . . I tell you I was in misery for the man. Any moment he might lurch overboard, or else throw himself over—one as likely as another with a poor chap in that state. Yet how could I help —cut off, without boat or any means to get to him?

"Forth and back he kept goin', in his heavy sea-boots. I could hear every step he took, and when he kicked against the hatchway-coamin' (he did this scores o' times) and when he stood still and spat overboard. Once he tripped over the ship's mop—got the handle a-foul of his legs, and talked to it like a pers'nal enemy. Terrible language—terrible!

"It struck me after a bit"—here Pilot Matthey turned to me with one of those shy smiles which, as they reveal his childish, simple heart, compel you to love the man. "It struck me after a bit that a hemn-tune mightn't come amiss to a man in that distress of mind. So I pitched to sing that grand old tune, 'Partners of a glorious hope,' a bit low at first, but louder as I picked up confidence. Soon as he heard it he stopped short, and called out to me to shut my head. So, findin' that hemns only excited him, I sat quiet, while he picked up his tramp again.

"I had allowed to myself that 'twould be all right soon after eleven, when the publics closed, and his mates would be turnin' up, to take care of him. But eleven o'clock struck, back in the town; and the quarters, and then twelve; and still no boat came off from shore. Then, soon after twelve, he grew quiet of a sudden. The trampin' stopped. I reckoned he'd gone below, though I couldn't be certain. But bein' by this time pretty cold with watchin', and dog-tired, I tumbled below and into my bunk. I must have been uneasy though, for I didn't take off more'n my boots.

"What's more I couldn't have slept more than a dog's sleep. For I woke up sudden to the noise of a splash—it seemed I'd been waitin' for it—and was up on deck in two shakes.

"Yes, the chap was overboard, fast enough—I heard a sort of gurgle as he came to the surface, and some sort of attempt at a cry. Before he went under again, the tide drifted his head like a little black buoy across the ray of our ridin' light. So overboard I jumped, and struck out for him."

At this point—the exciting point—Pilot Matthey's narrative halted, hesitated, grew meagre and ragged.

"I got a grip on him as he rose. He couldn't swim better'n a few strokes at the best. (So many of our boys won't larn to swim—they say it only lengthens things out when your time comes.) . . . The man was drownin', but he had sproil enough to catch at me and try to pull me under along with him. I knew that trick, though, luckily. . . . I got him round on his back, with my hands under his armpits, and kicked out for the *Maid in Two Minds*.

"'Tisn't easy to climb straight out o' the water and

board a lugger—not at the best of times, when you've only yourself to look after; and the *Maid in Two Minds* had no accommodation-ladder hung out . . . But, as luck would have it, they'd downed sail anyhow and, among other things, left the out-haul of the mizen danglin' slack and close to the water. I reached for this, shortened up on it till I had it taut, and gave it into his hand to cling by—which he had the sense to do, havin' fetched back some of his wits. After that I scrambled on to the mizen-boom somehow and hauled him aboard mainly by his collar and seat of his trousers. It was a job, too; and the first thing he did on deck was to reach his head overside and be vi'lently sick.

"He couldn't have done better. When he'd finished I took charge, hurried him below—my! the mess down there!—and got him into somebody's dry clothes. All the time he was whimperin' and shiverin'; and he whimpered and shivered still when I coaxed him into his bunk and tucked him up in every rug I could find. There was a bottle of whisky, pretty near empty, 'pon the table. Seein' how wistful the poor chap looked at it, and mindin' how much whisky and salt water he'd got rid of, I mixed the dregs of it with a little hot water off the stove, and poured it into him. Then I filled up the bottle with hot water, corked it hard, and slipped it down under the blankets, to warm his feet.

"'That's all right, matey,' said he, his teeth chatterin' as I snugged him down. 'But cut along and leave me afore the others come.'

"Well, that was sense in its way, though he didn't seem to take account that there was only one way back for me—the way I'd come.

"'You'll do, all right?' said I.

"'I'll do right enough now,' said he. 'You cut along.'

"So I left him. I was that chilled in my drippin' clothes, the second swim did me more good than harm. When I got to the *Early and Late*, though, I was pretty dead beat, and it cost me half a dozen tries before I could heave myself on to the accommodation-ladder. Hows'ever, once on board I had a strip and a good rub-down, and tumbled to bed glowin' like a babby.

"I slept like a top, too, this time. What woke me was a voice close abeam, hailin' the *Early and Late*; and there was a brisk, brass-bound young chap alongside in a steam-launch, explainin' as he'd brought out the boat, and why the harbour-master hadn't sent her out last night. 'As requested by your crew, Cap'n.' 'That's very polite o' them and o' you, and o' the harbour-master,' said I; 'and I wish you the compliments o' the season.' For I liked the looks of him there, smiling up in an obliging way, and Plymouth bells behind him all sounding to Church together for Christmas. 'Same to you, Cap'n!' he called out, and sheered off with a wave o' the hand, having made the boat fast astern.

"I stared after him for a bit, and then I turned my attention to the *Maid in Two Minds*. Her boat, too, lay astern of her; and one of her crew was already on deck, swabbin' down. After a bit, another showed up. But Dog Mitchell made no appearance.

"Nat'rally enough my thoughts ran on him durin' breakfast; and, when 'twas done, I dressed myself and pulled over to inquire. By this time all three of his mates were on deck, and as I pulled close they drew together—much as to ask what I wanted.

"'I came across,' says I, 'to ask after the boss. Is he all right this morning?'

"'Why not?' asked one o' the men, suspicious-like, with a glance at the others. They were all pretty yellow in the gills after their night ashore.

"'What's up?' says Dog Mitchell's own voice on top o' this: and the man heaved himself on deck and looked down on me.

"'It's the skipper of the *Early and Late*,' said one of the fellows grinning; 'as seems to say he has the pleasure o' your acquaintance.'

"'Does he?' said Dog Mitchell slowly, chewing. The man's eyes were bleared yet, but the drink had gone out of him with his shock: or the few hours' sleep had picked him round. He hardened his eyes on me, anyway, and says he—'Does he? Then he's a bloody liar!'

"I didn't make no answer, sir. I saw what he had in mind—that I'd come off on the first opportunity, cadgin' for some reward. I turned the boat's head about, and started to pull back for the *Early and Late*. The men laughed after me, jeering-like. And Dog Mitchell, he laughed, too, in the wake o' them, with a kind of challenge as he saw my lack o' pluck. And away back in Plymouth the bells kept on ringing.

"That's the story. You asked how I could tell what the blessed Lord felt like when Peter denied. I don't know. But I seemed to feel like it, just that once."

THE MONT-BAZILLAC

I HAVE a sincere respect and liking for the Vicar of Gantick—"th' old Parson Kendall," as we call him—but have somewhat avoided his hospitality since Mrs. Kendall took up with the teetotal craze. I say nothing against the lady's renouncing, an she choose, the light dinner claret, the cider, the port (pale with long maturing in the wood) which her table afforded of yore: nor do I believe that the Vicar, excellent man, repines deeply—though I once caught the faint sound of a sigh as we stood together and conned his cider-apple trees, ungarnered, shedding their fruit at random in the long grasses. For his glebe contains a lordly orchard, and it used to be a treat to watch him, his greenish third-best coat stuck all over with apple-pips and shreds of pomace, as he helped to work the press at the great annual cider-making. But I agree with their son, Master Dick, that "it's rough on the guests."

Master Dick is now in his second year at Oxford; and it was probably for his sake, to remove temptation from the growing lad, that Mrs. Kendall first discovered the wickedness of all alcoholic drink. Were he not an ordinary, good-natured boy—had he, as they say, an ounce of vice in him—I doubt the good lady's method might go some way towards defeating her purpose. As things are, it will probably take no worse revenge upon her solicitude than by weaning him insensibly

away from home, to use his vacation-times in learning to be a man.

Last Long Vacation, in company with a friend he calls Jinks, Master Dick took a Canadian canoe out to Bordeaux by steamer, and spent six adventurous weeks in descending the Dordogne and exploring the Garonne with its tributaries. On his return he walked over to find me smoking in my garden after dinner, and gave me a gleeful account of his itinerary.

". . . and the next place we came to was Bergerac," said he, after ten minutes of it.

"Ah!" I murmured. "Bergerac!"

"You know it?"

"Passably well," said I. "It lies toward the edge of the claret country; but it grows astonishing claret. When I was about your age it grew a wine yet more astonishing."

"Hallo!" Master Dick paused in the act of lighting his pipe and dropped the match hurriedly as the flame scorched his fingers.

"It was grown on a hill just outside the town—the Mont-Bazillac. I once drank a bottle of it."

"Lord! You too? . . . *Do* tell me what happened!"

"Never," I responded firmly. "The Mont-Bazillac is extinct, swept out of existence by the phylloxera when you were a babe in arms. *Infandum jubes renovare*—no one any longer can tell you what that wine was. They made it of the ripe grape. It had the raisin flavour with something—no more than a hint—of Madeira in it: the leathery tang—how to describe it?"

"You need not try, when I have two bottles of it at home, at this moment!"

"When I tell you——" I began.

"Oh, but wait till you've heard the story!" he interrupted. "As I was saying, we came to Bergerac and put up for the night at the *Couronne d'Or*—first-class cooking. Besides ourselves there were three French bagmen at the *table d'hôte*. The usual sort. Jinks, who talks worse French than I do (if that's possible), and doesn't mind, got on terms with them at once. . . . For my part I can always hit it off with a commercial—it's the sort of mind that appeals to me—and these French bagmen *do* know something about eating and drinking. That's how it happened. One of them started chaffing us about the *ordinaire* we were drinking—quite a respectable tap, by the way. He had heard that Englishmen drank only the strongest wine, and drank it in any quantities. Then another said: 'Ah, messieurs, if you would drink for the honour of England, *justement* you should match yourselves here in this town against the famous Mont-Bazillac.' 'What is this Mont-Bazillac?' we asked: and they told us—well, pretty much what you told me just now—adding, however, that the landlord kept a few precious bottles of it. They were quite fair in their warnings."

"Which, of course, you disregarded."

"For the honour of England. We rang for the landlord—a decent fellow, Sébillot by name—and at first, I may tell you, he wasn't at all keen on producing the stuff; kept protesting that he had but a small half-dozen left, that his daughter was to be married in the autumn, and he had meant to keep it for the wedding banquet. However, the bagmen helping, we persuaded him to bring up two bottles. A frantic price it was, too—frantic for *us*. Seven francs a bottle."

"It was four francs fifty even in my time."

"The two bottles were opened. Jinks took his, and I took mine. We had each *arroséd* the dinner with about a pint of Bordeaux; nothing to count. We looked at each other straight. I said, 'Be a man, Jinks! *À votre santé messieurs!*' and we started. . . . As you said just now, it's a most innocent-tasting wine."

"As a matter of fact, I didn't say so. Still, you are right."

"The fourth and fifth glasses, too, seemed to have no more kick in them than the first. . . . Nothing much seemed to be happening, except that Sébillot had brought in an extra lamp—at any rate, the room was brighter, and I could see the bagmen's faces more distinctly as they smiled and congratulated us. I drank off the last glass 'to the honour of England,' and suggested to Jinks—who had kept pace with me, glass for glass—that we should take a stroll and view the town. There was a fair (as I had heard) across the bridge. . . . We stood up together. I had been feeling nervous about Jinks, and it came as a relief to find that he was every bit as steady on his legs as I was. We said good evening to the bagmen and walked out into the street. 'Up the hill or down?' asked Jinks, and I explained to him very clearly that, since rivers followed the bottoms of their valleys, we should be safe in going downhill if we wanted to find the bridge. And I'd scarcely said the words before it flashed across me that I was drunk as Chloe.

"Here's another thing.—I'd never been drunk before, and I haven't been drunk since: but all the same I knew that this wasn't the least like ordinary drunkenness: it was too—what shall I say?—too brilliant. The

whole town of Bergerac belonged to me: and, what was better, it was lit so that I could steer my way perfectly, although the street seemed to be quite amazingly full of people, jostling and chattering. I turned to call Jinks's attention to this, and was saying something about a French crowd—how much cheerfuller it was than your average English one—when all of a sudden Jinks wasn't there! No, nor the crowd! I was alone on Bergerac bridge, and I leaned with both elbows on the parapet and gazed at the Dordogne flowing beneath the moon.

"It was not an ordinary river, for it ran straight up into the sky: and the moon, unlike ordinary moons, kept whizzing on an axis like a Catherine-wheel, and swelled every now and then and burst into showers of the most dazzling fireworks. I leaned there and stared at the performance, feeling just like a king—proud, you understand, but with a sort of noble melancholy. I knew all the time that I was drunk; but that didn't seem to matter. The bagmen had told me——"

I nodded again.

"That's one of the extraordinary things about the Mont-Bazillac," I corroborated. "It's all over in about an hour, and there's not (as the saying goes) a headache in a hogshead."

"I wouldn't quite say that," said Dick reflectively. "But you're partly right. All of a sudden the moon stopped whizzing, the river lay down in its bed, and my head became clear as a bell. 'The trouble will be,' I told myself, 'to find the hotel again.' But I had no trouble at all. My brain picked up bearing after bearing. I worked back up the street like a prize Baden-Powell scout, found the portico, remembered

the stairway to the left, leading to the lounge, went up it, and recognising the familiar furniture, dropped into an armchair with a happy sigh. My only worry, as I picked up a copy of the *Gil Blas* and began to study it, was about Jinks. But, you see, there wasn't much call to go searching after him when my own experience told me it would be all right.

"There were, maybe, half a dozen men in the lounge, scattered about in the armchairs and smoking. By and by, glancing up from my newspaper, I noticed that two or three had their eyes fixed on me pretty curiously. One of them—an old boy with a grizzled moustache—set down his paper, and came slowly across the room. 'Pardon, monsieur,' he said in the politest way, 'but have we the honour of numbering you amongst our members?' 'Good Lord!' cried I, sitting up, 'isn't this the *Couronne d'Or*?' 'Pray let monsieur not discommode himself,' said he, with a quick no-offence sort of smile, 'but he has made a little mistake. This is the *Cercle Militaire*.'

"I must say those French officers were jolly decent about it: especially when I explained about the Mont-Bazillac. They saw me back to the hotel in a body; and as we turned in at the porchway, who should come down the street but Jinks, striding elbows to side, like a man in a London-to-Brighton walking competition! . . . He told me, as we found our bedrooms, that '*of course*, he had gone up the hill, and that the view had been magnificent.' I did not argue about it, luckily: for—here comes in another queer fact—*there was no moon at all that night*. Next morning I wheedled two more bottles of the stuff out of old Sébillot—which leaves him two for the wedding. I thought that you

and I might have some fun with them. . . . Now tell me *your* experience."

"That," said I, "must wait until you unlock my tongue; if indeed you have brought home the genuine Mont-Bazillac."

As it happened, Master Dick was called up to Oxford unexpectedly, a week before the beginning of term, to start practice in his college "four." Our experiment had to be postponed; with what result you shall hear.

About a fortnight later I read in our local paper that the Bishop had been holding a Confirmation service in Gantick Parish Church. The paragraph went on to say that "a large and reverent congregation witnessed the ceremony, but general regret was expressed at the absence of our respected Vicar through a temporary indisposition. We are glad to assure our readers that the reverend gentleman is well on the way to recovery, and indeed has already resumed his ministration in the parish, where his genial presence and quick sympathies, etc."

This laid an obligation upon me to walk over to Gantick and inquire about my old friend's health: which I did that same afternoon. Mrs. Kendall received me with the information that her husband was quite well again, and out-and-about; that in fact he had started, immediately after luncheon, to pay a round of visits on the outskirts of the parish. On the nature of his late indisposition she showed herself reticent, not to say "short" in her answers; nor, though the hour was four o'clock, did she invite me to stay and drink tea with her.

On my way back, and just within the entrance-gate of the vicarage drive, I happened on old Trewoon, who works at odd jobs under the gardener, and was just now busy with a besom, sweeping up the first fall of autumn leaves. Old Trewoon, I should tell you, is a Wesleyan, and a Radical of the sardonic sort; and, as a jobbing man, holds himself free to criticise his employers.

"Good afternoon!" said I. "This is excellent news that I hear about the Vicar. I was afraid, when I first heard of his illness, that it might be something serious —at his age——"

"Serious?" Old Trewoon rested his hands on the besom-handle and eyed me, with a twist of his features. "Missus didn' tell you the natur' of the complaint, I reckon?"

"As a matter of fact she did not."

"I bet she didn'. Mind you, *I* don't know, nuther." He up-ended his besom and plucked a leaf or two from between the twigs before adding, "And what, makin' so bold, did she tell about the Churchwardens?"

"The Churchwardens?" I echoed.

"Aye, the Churchwardens: Matthey Hancock an' th' old Farmer Truslove. They was took ill right about the same time. Aw, my dear"—Mr. Trewoon addresses all mankind impartially as "my dear"—"th' hull parish knaws about *they*. Though there warn't no concealment, for that matter."

"What about the Churchwardens?" I asked innocently, and of a sudden became aware that he was rocking to and fro in short spasms of inward laughter.

"—It started wi' the Bishop's motor breakin' down; whereby he and his man spent the better part of two hours in a God-forsaken lane somewhere t'other side

of Hen's Beacon, tryin' to make her go. He'd timed hisself to reach here punctual for the lunchin' the Missus always has ready on Confirmation Day: nobody to meet his Lordship but theirselves and the two Churchwardens; an' you may guess that Hancock and Truslove had turned up early in their best broadcloth, lookin' to have the time o' their lives.

"They were pretty keen-set, too, by one o'clock, bein' used to eat their dinners at noon sharp. One o'clock comes—no Bishop: two o'clock and still no Bishop. 'There's been a naccydent,' says the Missus: 'but thank the Lord the vittles is cold!' 'Maybe he've forgot the day,' says the Vicar; 'but any way, we'll give en another ha'f-hour's grace an' then set-to,' says he, takin' pity on the noises old Truslove was makin' inside his weskit. . . . So said, so done. At two-thirty —service bein' fixed for ha'f-after-three—they all fell to work.

"You d'know, I dare say, what a craze the Missus have a-took o' late against the drinkin' habit. Sally, the parlourmaid, told me as how, first along, th' old lady set out by hintin' that the Bishop, bein' a respecter o' conscience, wouldn' look for anything stronger on the table than home-brewed lemonade. But there the Vicar struck; and findin' no way to shake him, she made terms by outin' with two bottles o' wine that, to her scandal, she'd rummaged out from a cupboard o' young Master Dick's since he went back to Oxford College. She decanted 'em [chuckle], an' th' old Vicar allowed, havin' tasted the stuff, that—though he had lost the run o' wine lately, an' didn' reckernise whether 'twas port or what-not—seemin' to him 'twas a sound wine and fit for any gentleman's table. 'Well, at any rate,'

says the Missus, 'my boy shall be spared the temptation: an' I hope 'tis no sign he's betaken hisself to secret drinkin'!'

"Well, then, it was decanted: an' Hancock and Truslove, nothin' doubtful, begun to lap it up like so much milk—the Vicar helpin', and the Missus rather encouragin' than not, to the extent o' the first decanter; thinkin' that 'twas good riddance to the stuff and that if the Bishop turned up, he wouldn't look, as a holy man, for more than ha'f a bottle. I'm tellin' it you as Sally told it to me. She says that everything went on as easy as eggs in a nest until she started to hand round the sweets, and all of a sudden she didn' know what was happenin' at table, nor whether she was on her head or her heels. . . . All I can tell you, sir, is that me and Battershall" —Battershall is the vicarage gardener, stableman, and factotum—"was waitin' in the stables, wonderin' when in the deuce the Bishop would turn up, when we heard the whistle blown from the kitchen: which was the signal. Out we ran; an' there to be sure was the Bishop comin' down the drive in a hired trap. But between him and the house—slap-bang, as you might say, in the middle of the lawn—was our two Churchwardens, stripped mother-naked to the waist, and sparring: and from the window just over the porch th' old Missus screaming out to us to separate 'em. No, nor that wasn't the worst: for, as his Lordship's trap drove up, the two tom-fools stopped their boxin' to stand 'pon their toes and blow kisses at him!

"I must say that Battershall showed great presence o' mind. He shouted to me to tackle Truslove, while he ran up to Matthey Hancock an' butted him in the stomach; an' together we'd heaved the two tom-fools

into the shrubbery almost afore his Lordship could believe his eyes. I won't say what had happened to the Vicar, for I don't rightways know. All I can get out o' Sally—she's a modest wench—is that—that—*he wanted to be a Statoo! . . .*"

"Quite so," I interrupted, edging towards the gate and signifying with a gesture of the hand that I had heard enough.

Old Trewoon's voice followed me.

"I reckon, sir, we best agree, for the sake o' the dear old fella, that such a sight as them two Churchwardens was enough to make any gentleman take to his bed. But"—as the gate rang on its hasp and rang again—"I've been thinkin' powerful *what might ha' happened if his Lordship had turned up in due time to partake.*"

Master Dick is a good boy; and when we met in the Christmas vacation no allusion was made to the Mont-Bazillac. On my part, I am absolved from my promised confession, and my lips shall remain locked. That great, that exhilarating, that redoubtable wine, has—with the nuptials of M. Sébillot's daughter—perished finally from earth. I wonder what happened in Bergerac on that occasion, and if it had a comparable apotheosis!

THE THREE NECKLACES

"A GREAT nation!" said the little Curé. "But yes, indeed, the English are a very great nation. And now I have seen them at home! But it passes expression, monsieur, what a traveller I find myself!"

We stood together on the deck of the steamer, watching—after an eight hours' passage from Plymouth—the Breton coast as it loomed out of the afternoon haze. Our crossing had been smooth, yet sea-sickness had prostrated all his compatriots on board—five or six priests, as many réligieuses, and maybe a dozen peasants, whom I supposed to be attached in some way to the service of the religious orders the priests represented. (Of late years, since the French Government expelled them, quite a number of these orders have found a home in our West Country.) On my way to the docks that morning I had overtaken and passed them straggling by twos and threes to the steamer, the men in broad-brimmed hats with velvet ribbons, the women coifed and bodiced after the fashion of their country, each group shepherded by a priest; and I had noted how strange and almost forlorn a figure they cut in the grey English streets. If some of the strangeness had worn off, they certainly appeared no less forlorn as they sat huddled in physical anguish, dumb, immobile, staring at the sea.

The little Curé, however, was vivacious enough for

ten. It was impossible to avoid making friends with him. He had nothing to do, he told me, with his companions, but was just a plain parish priest returning from an errand of business.

He announced this with a fine roll of the voice.

"Of business," he repeated. "The English are a great nation for business. But how warm of heart, notwithstanding!"

"That is not always reckoned to us," said I.

"But *I* reckon it . . . *Tenez*, that will be Île Vierge —there, with the lighthouse standing white—as it were, beneath the cliffs; but the cliffs belong in fact to the mainland. . . . And now in a few minutes we come abreast of *my* parish—the Île Lezan. . . . See, see!" He caught my arm as the tide raced us down through the Passage du Four. "My church—how her spire stands up!" He turned to me, his voice shaking with emotion. "You English are accustomed to travel. Probably you do not guess, monsieur, with what feelings I see again Île Lezan — I, who have never crossed the Channel before nor indeed have visited any foreign land. But I am glad: it spreads the mind." Here he put his hands together and drew them apart as though extending a concertina. "I have seen you English at home. If monsieur, who is on tour, could only spare the time to visit me on Île Lezan!"

Well, the end of it was that before we parted on the quay at Brest I found myself under half a promise, and a week later, having (as I put it to myself) nothing better to do, I took the train to a little wind-swept terminus, whence a ramshackle cart jolted me to Port Lezan, on the coast, whence again by sail and oar a ferry-boat conveyed me over to the Island.

My friend the Curé greeted me with something not far short of ecstasy.

"But this is like you English—you keep your word. . . . You will hardly believe," he confided, as I shared his admirable déjeuner — soup, langouste, an incomparable omelet, stuffed veal, and I forget what beside —"you will hardly believe with what difficulty I bring myself back to this horizon." He waved a hand to the blue sea-line beyond his window. "When one has tasted progress——" He broke off. "But, thanks be to God, we too, on Île Lezan, are going to progress. You will visit my church and see how much we have need."

He took me to it: a bleak, decayed building, half ruinated, the slated pavement uneven as the waves of the sea, the plastered walls dripping with saline ooze. From the roof depended three or four rudely carved ships, hung there *ex voto* by parishioners preserved from various perils of the deep. He narrated their histories at length.

"The roof leaks," he said, "but we are to remedy that. At length the blessed Mary of Lezan will be housed, if not as befits her, at least not shamefully." He indicated a niched statue of the Virgin, with daubed red cheeks and a robe of crude blue overspread with blotches of sea-salt. "Thanks to your England," he added.

"Why 'thanks to England'?"

He chuckled—or perhaps I had better say chirruped.

"Did I not say I had been visiting your country on business? Eh? You shall hear the story—only I tell no names."

He took snuff.

"We will call them," he said, "only by their Christian names, which are Lucien and Jeanne. . . . I am to marry them next month, when Lucien gets his relief from the lighthouse on Île Ouessant.

"They are an excellent couple. As between them, the wits are with Lucien, who will doubtless rise in his profession. He has been through temptation, as you shall hear. For Jeanne, she is *un cœur simple*, as again you will discover; not clever at all—oh, by no means! —yet one of the best of my children. It is really to Jeanne that we owe it all. . . . I have said so to Lucien, and just at the moment Lucien was trying to say it to me.

"They were betrothed, you understand. Lucien was nineteen, and Jeanne maybe a year younger. From the beginning, it had been an understood thing: to this extent understood, that Lucien, instead of sailing to the fishery (whither go most of the young men of Île Lezan and the coast hereabouts) was destined from the first to enter the lighthouse service under Government. The letters I have written to Government on his behalf! . . . I am not one of those who quarrel with the Republic. Still—a priest, and in this out-of-the-way spot—what is he?

"However, Lucien got his appointment. The pay? Enough to marry on, for a free couple. But the families were poor on both sides—long families, too. Folk live long on Île Lezan—women-folk especially; accidents at the fishery keep down the men. Still, and allowing for that, the average is high. Lucien had even a great-grandmother alive—a most worthy soul—and on Jeanne's side the grandparents survived on both sides. Where there are grandparents they must be maintained.

"No one builds on Île Lezan. Lucien and Jeanne —on either side their families crowded to the very windows. If only the smallest hovel might fall vacant! . . . For a week or two it seemed that a cottage might drop in their way; but it happened to be what you call picturesque, and a rich man snapped it up. He was a stranger from Paris, and called himself an artist; but in truth he painted little, and that poorly—as even *I* could see. He was fonder of planning what he would have, and what not, to indulge his mood when it should be in the key for painting. Happening here just when the cottage fell empty, he offered a price for it far beyond anything Lucien could afford, and bought it. For a month or two he played with this new toy, adding a studio and a veranda, and getting over many large crates of furniture from the mainland. Then by and by a restlessness overtook him—that restlessness which is the disease of the rich—and he left us, yet professing that it delighted him always to keep his little *pied-à-terre* in Île Lezan. He has never been at pains to visit us since.

"But meanwhile Lucien and Jeanne had no room to marry and set up house. It was a heavy time for them. They had some talk together of crossing over and finding a house on the mainland; but it came to nothing. The parents on both sides would not hear of it, and in truth Jeanne would have found it lonely on the mainland, away from her friends and kin; for Lucien, you see, must in any case spend half his time on the lighthouse on Île Ouessant. So many weeks on duty, so many weeks ashore—thus it works, and even so the loneliness wears them; though our Bretons, being silent men by nature, endure it better than the rest.

"Lucien and Jeanne must wait—wait for somebody to die. In plain words it came to that. Ah, monsieur! I have heard well-to-do folk talk of our poor as unfeeling. That is an untruth. But suppose it were true. Where would the blame lie in such a story as this? Like will to like, and young blood is hot. . . . Lucien and Jeanne, however, were always well conducted. . . . Yes, yes, my story? Six months passed, and then came word that our rich artist desired to sell his little *pied-à-terre*; but he demanded the price he had given for it, and, moreover, what he called compensation for the buildings he had added. Also he would only sell or let it with the furniture; he wished, in short, to disencumber himself of his purchase, and without loss. This meant that Lucien less than ever could afford to buy; and there are no money-lenders on Île Lezan. The letter came as he was on the point of departing for another six weeks on Île Ouessant: and that evening the lovers' feet took them to the nest they had so often dreamed of furnishing. There is no prettier cottage on the island—I will show it to you on our way back. Very disconsolately they looked at it, but there was no cure. Lucien left early next morning.

"That was last autumn, a little before the wreck of your great English steamship the *Rougemont Castle*. Days after, the tides carried some of the bodies even here, to Île Lezan; but not many—four or five at the most—and we, cut off from shore around this corner of the coast, were long in hearing the terrible news. Even the lighthouse-keepers on Île Ouessant knew nothing of it until morning, for she struck in the night, you remember, attempting to run through the Inner Passage and save her time.

"I believe—but on this point will not be certain—that the alarm first came to Lucien, and in the way I shall tell you. At any rate he was walking alone in the early morning, and somewhere along the shore to the south of the lighthouse, when he came on a body lying on the seaweed in a gully of the rocks.

"It was the body of a woman, clad only in a night-dress. As he stooped over her, Lucien saw that she was exceeding beautiful; yet not a girl, but a well-developed woman of thirty or thereabouts, with heavy coils of dark hair, well-rounded shoulders, and (as he described it to me later on) a magnificent throat.

"He had reason enough to remark her throat, for as he turned the body over—it lay on its right side—to place a hand over the heart, if perchance some life lingered, the nightdress, open at the throat, disclosed one, two, three superb necklaces of diamonds. There were rings of diamonds on her fingers, too, and afterwards many fine gems were found sewn within a short vest or camisole of silk she wore under her nightdress. But Lucien's eyes were fastened on the three necklaces.

"Doubtless the poor lady, aroused in her berth as the ship struck, had clasped these hurriedly about her throat before rushing on deck. So, might her life be spared, she would save with it many thousands of pounds. They tell me since that in moments of panic women always think first of their jewels.

"But here she lay drowned, and the jewels—as I said, Lucien could not unglue his eyes from them. At first he stared at them stupidly. Not for some minutes did his mind grasp that they represented great wealth; and even when the temptation grew, it whispered no more than that here was money—maybe even a hundred

pounds—but enough, at all events, added to his savings, to purchase the cottage at home, and make him and Jeanne happy for the rest of their lives.

"His fingers felt around to the clasps. One by one he detached the necklaces and slipped them into his trousers' pocket.

"He also managed to pull off one of the rings; but found this a more difficult matter, because the fingers were swollen somewhat with the salt water. So he contented himself with one, and ran back to the lighthouse to give the alarm to his comrades.

"When his comrades saw the body there was great outcry upon the jewels on its fingers; but none attempted to disturb them, and Lucien kept his own counsel. They carried the poor thing to a store-chamber at the base of the lighthouse, and there before nightfall they had collected close upon thirty bodies. There was much talk in the newspapers afterwards concerning the honesty of our poor Bretons, who pillaged none of the dead, but gave up whatever they found. The relatives and the great shipping company subscribed a fund, of which a certain small portion came even to Île Lezan to be administered by me.

"The poor lady with the necklaces? If you read the accounts in the newspapers, as no doubt you did, you will already have guessed her name. Yes, in truth, she was your great soprano, whom they called Madame Chiara, or La Chiara: so modest are you English, at least in all that concerns the arts, that when an incomparable singer is born to you she must go to Italy to borrow a name. She was returning from South Africa, where the finest of the three necklaces had been presented to her by subscription amongst her admirers.

They say her voice so ravished the audiences at Johannesburg and Pretoria that she might almost, had she willed, have carried home the great diamond they are sending to your King. But that, no doubt, was an invention of the newspapers.

"For certain, at any rate, the necklace was a superb one; nor do I speak without knowledge, as you shall hear. Twenty-seven large stones—between each a lesser stone—and all of the purest water! The other two were scarcely less magnificent. It was a brother who came over and certified the body; for her husband she had divorced in America, and her father was an English clergyman, old and infirm, seldom travelling beyond the parish where he lives in a château and reigns as a king. It seems that these things happen in England. At first he was only a younger son, and dwelt in the rectory as a plain parish priest, and there he married and brought up his family; but his elder brother dying, he became seigneur of the parish too, and moved into a great house, yet with little money to support it until his only daughter came back from studying at Milan and conquered London. The old gentleman speaks very modestly about it. Oh, yes, I have seen and talked with him. And what a garden! The azaleas! the rhododendrons! But he is old, and his senses somewhat blunted. He lives in the past—not his own, but his family's rather. He spoke to me of his daughter without emotion, and said that her voice was undoubtedly derived from three generations back, when an ancestor —a baronet—had married with an opera-singer.

"But we were talking of the necklaces and of the ring which Lucien had taken. . . . He told his secret to nobody, but kept them ever in his trousers' pocket.

Only, when he could escape away from his comrades to some corner of the shore, he would draw the gems forth and feast his eyes on them. I believe it weighed on him very little that he had committed a crime or a sin. Longshore folk have great ease of conscience respecting all property cast up to them by the sea. They regard all such as their rightful harvest: the feeling is in their blood, and I have many times argued in vain against it. Once while I argued, here in Île Lezan, an old man asked me, 'But, Father, if it were not for such chances, why should any man choose to dwell by the sea?' If, monsieur, you lived among them and knew their hardships, you would see some rude sense in that question.

"To Lucien, feasting his eyes by stealth on the diamonds and counting the days to his relief, the stones meant that Jeanne and happiness were now close within his grasp. There would be difficulty, to be sure, in disposing of them; but with Jeanne's advice—she had a practical mind—and perhaps with Jeanne's help, the way would not be hard to find. He was inclined to plume himself on the ease with which, so far, it had been managed. His leaving the rings, and the gems sewn within the camisole—though to be sure these were not discovered for many hours—had been a masterstroke. He and his comrades had been complimented together upon their honesty.

"The relief came duly; and in this frame of mind—a little sly, but more than three parts triumphant—he returned to Île Lezan and was made welcome as something of a hero. (To do him credit, he had worked hard in recovering the bodies from the wreck.) At all times it is good to arrive home after a spell on the lighthouse.

The smell of nets drying and of flowers in the gardens, the faces on the quay, and the handshakes, and the first church-going—they all count. But to Lucien these things were for once as little compared with the secret he carried. His marriage now was assured, and that first evening—the Eve of Noël—he walked with Jeanne up the road to the cottage, and facing it, told her his secret. They could be married now. He promised it, and indicated the house with a wave of the hand almost proprietary.

"But Jeanne looked at him as one scared, and said: 'Shall I marry a thief?'

"Then, very quietly, she asked for a look at the jewels, and he handed them to her. She had never set eyes on diamonds before, but all women have an instinct for jewels, and these made her gasp. 'Yes,' she owned, 'I could not have believed that the world contained such beautiful things. I am sorry thou hast done this wickedness, but I understand how they tempted thee.'

"'What is this you are chanting?' demanded Lucien. 'The stones were nothing to me. I thought only that by selling them we two could set up house as man and wife.'

"'My dear one,' said Jeanne, 'what happiness could we have known with this between us?' What with the diamonds in her hand and the little cottage there facing her, so long desired, she was forced to shut her eyes for a moment; but when she opened them again her voice was quite firm. 'We must restore them where they belong. It may be that Père Thomas can help us; but I must think of a way. Give them to me, and let me keep them while I think of a way.'

"'You do not love me as I love you,' said Lucien in his anger and disappointment; but he knew, all the same, that he spoke an untruth.

"Jeanne took the diamonds home with her, to her bedroom, and sat for some time on the edge of her bed, thinking out a way. In the midst of her thinking she stood up, walked over to the glass, and clasped the finest of the necklaces about her throat. . . . I suppose no woman of this country ever wore the like of it—no, not in the days when there were kings and queens of Léon. . . . Jeanne was not beautiful, but she gazed at herself with eyes like those of a patient in a fever. . . . Then of a sudden she felt the stones burning her as though they had been red-hot coals. She plucked them off, and cast herself on her knees beside the bed.

"You will remember that this was the Eve of Noël, when the children of the parish help me to deck the *crèche* for the infant Christ. We take down the images—see, there is St. Joseph, and there yonder Our Lady, in the side chapel; the two oxen and a sheep are put away in the vestry, in a cupboard full of camphor. We have the Three Kings too. . . . In short, we put our hearts into the dressing-up. By nightfall all is completed, and I turn the children out, reserving some few last touches which I invent to surprise them when they come again on Christmas morning. Afterwards I celebrate the Mass for the Vigil, and then always I follow what has been a custom in this parish, I believe, ever since the church was built. I blow out all the candles but two, and remain here, seated, until the day breaks, and the folk assemble to celebrate the first Mass of Noël. Eh? It is discipline, but I bring rugs,

and I will not say that all the time my eyes are wide open.

"Certainly I closed them on this night of which I am telling. For I woke up with a start, and almost, you might say, in trepidation, for it seemed to me that someone was moving in the church. My first thought was that some mischievous child had crept in, and was playing pranks with my *crèche*, and to that first I made my way. Beyond the window above it rode the flying moon, and in the rays of it what did I see?

"The figures stood as I had left them. But above the manger, over the shoulders of the Virgin, blazed a rope of light—of diamonds such as I have never seen nor shall see again—all flashing green and blue and fieriest scarlet and piercing white. Of the Three Kings, also each bore a gift, two of them a necklace apiece, and the third a ring. I stood before the miracle, and my tongue clave to the roof of my mouth, and then a figure crept out of the shadows and knelt in the pool of moonlight at my feet. It was Jeanne. She caught at the skirt of my soutane, and broke into sobbing.

"'My father, let the Blessed One wear them ever, or else help me to give them back!'

"You will now guess, monsieur, on what business I have been visiting England. It is a great country. The old clergyman sat among his azaleas and rhododendrons and listened to all my story. Then he took the box that held his daughter's jewels, and, emptying it upon the table, chose out one necklace and set it aside. 'This one,' said he, 'shall be sold, my friend, and with the money you shall, after giving this girl a marriage portion, re-adorn your church on Île Lezan to the greater glory of God!'"

On our way back to his lodging the little Curé halted me before the cottage. Gay curtains hung in the windows, and the veranda had been freshly painted.

"At the end of the month Lucien gets his relief, and then they are to be married," said the little Curé.

THE WREN

A LEGEND

EARLY on St. Stephen's Day—which is the day after Christmas—young John Cara, son of old John Cara, the smith of Porthennis, took down his gun and went forth to kill small birds. He was not a sportsman; it hurt him to kill any living creature. But all the young men in the parish went slaughtering birds on St. Stephen's Day; and the Parson allowed there was warrant for it, because, when St. Stephen had almost escaped from prison, a small bird (by tradition a wren) had chirped, and awakened his gaolers.

Strange to say, John Cara's dislike of gunning went with a singular aptitude for it. He had a quick sense with birds; could guess their next movements just as though he read their minds; and rarely missed his aim if he took it without giving himself time to think.

Now the rest of youths, that day, chose the valley bottoms as a matter of course, and trooped about in parties, with much whacking of bushes. But John went up to Balmain—which is a high stony moor overlooking the sea—because he preferred to be alone, and also because, having studied their ways, he knew this to be the favourite winter haunt of the small birds, especially of the wrens and the titlarks.

His mother had set her heart on making a large wranny-pie (that is, wren-pie, but actually it includes all manner of birdlings). It was to be the largest in the parish. She was vain of young John's prowess,

and would quote it when old John grumbled that the lad was slow as a smith. "And yet," said old John, "backward isn't the word so much as foolish. Up to a point he understands iron 'most so well as I understand it myself. Then some notion takes him, and my back's no sooner turned than he spoils his job. Always trying to make iron do what iron won't do—that's how you may put it." The wife, who was a silly woman, and (like many another such) looked down on her husband's trade, maintained that her boy ought to have been born a squire, with game of his own.

Young John went up to Balmain; and there, sure enough, he found wrens and titlarks flitting about everywhere, cheeping amid the furze-bushes on the low stone hedges and the granite boulders, where the winter rains had hollowed out little basins for themselves, little by little, working patiently for hundreds of years. The weather was cold, but still and sunny. As he climbed, the sea at first made a blue strip beyond the cliff's edge on his right, then spread into a wide blue floor, three hundred feet below him, and all the width of it twinkling. Ahead and on his left all the moorland twinkled too, with the comings and goings of the birds. The wrens mostly went about their business—whatever that might be—in a sharp, practical way, keeping silence; but the frail note of the titlarks sounded here, there, everywhere.

Young John might have shot scores of them. But, as he headed for the old mine-house of Balmain and the cromlech, or Main-Stone, which stands close beside it—and these are the only landmarks—he did not even trouble to charge his gun. For the miracle was happening already.

It began—as perhaps most miracles do—very slowly

and gently, without his perceiving it; quite trivially, too, and even absurdly. It started within him, upon a thought that wren-pie was a foolish dish after all! His mother, who prided herself upon making it, did but pretend to enjoy it after it was cooked. His father did not even pretend: the mass of little bones in it cheated his appetite and spoiled his temper. From this, young John went on to consider. "Was it worth while to go on killing wrens and shamming an appetite for them, only because a wren had once informed against St. Stephen? How were *these* wrens guilty? And, anyway, how were the titlarks guilty?" Young John reasoned it out in this simple fashion. He came to the Main-Stone, and seating himself on the turf, leaned his back against one of the blocks which support the huge monolith. He sat there for a long while, puckering his brows, his gun idle beside him. At last he said to himself, but firmly and aloud:

"Parson and the rest say 'tis true. But I can't believe it, and something inside says 'tis wrong. . . . There! I won't shoot another bird—and that settles it!"

"Halleluia!" said a tiny voice somewhere above him.

The voice, though tiny, was shrill and positive. Young John recognised, and yet did not recognise it. He stared up at the wall of the old mine-house from which it had seemed to speak, but he could see no one. Next he thought that the word must have come from his own heart, answering a sudden gush of warmth and happiness that set his whole body glowing. It was as if winter had changed to summer, within him and without, and all in a moment. He blinked in the stronger sunshine, and felt it warm upon his eyelids.

"Halleluia!" said the voice again. It certainly came from the wall. He looked again, and, scanning it in this strange, new light, was aware of a wren in one of the crevices.

"Will he? will he?" piped another voice, pretty close behind his ear. Young John, now he had learnt that wrens can talk, had no difficulty in recognising this other voice: it was the half-hearted note of the titlark. He turned over on his side and peered into the shadow of the Main-Stone; but in vain, for the titlark is a hesitating, unhappy little soul that never quite dares to make up its mind. It used to be the friend of a race that inhabited Cornwall ages ago. It builds in their cromlechs, and its song remembers them. It is the bird, too, in whose nest the cuckoo lays; so it knows all about losing one's children and being dispossessed.

"We will give him a gift," chirruped the wren, "and send him about his business. He is the first man that has the sense to leave us to ours."

"But will he?—will he?" the titlark piped back ghostlily. "One can never be sure. I have known men long, long before ever you came here. I knew King Arthur. This rock was his table, and he dined here with seven other kings on the night after they had beaten the Danes at Vellandruchar. I hid under the stone and listened to them passing the cups, and between their talk you could hear the stream running down the valley—it turned the two mill-wheels, Vellandruchar and Vellandreath, with blood that night. Even at daybreak it ran high over the legs of the choughs walking on the beach below—that is why the choughs go red-legged to this day. . . . They are few now, but then

they were many: and next spring they came and built in the rigging of the Danes' ships, left ashore—for not a Dane had escaped. But King Arthur had gone his way. Ah, he was a man!"

"Nevertheless," struck in the wren, "this is a good fellow too; and a smith, whose trade is as old as your King Arthur's. We will prosper him in it."

"What will you give him?" asked the titlark.

"He is lying at this moment on the trefoil that commands all metals. Let him look to his gun when he awakes."

"Ah!" said the titlark, "I told you that secret. I was with Teague the Smith when he discovered it. . . . But he discovered it too late; and, besides, he was a dreamer, and used it only to make crosses and charms and womanish ornaments."

"It's no use to *us*, anyhow," said the practical wren. "So let us give it away. I hate waste."

"I doubt," said the titlark, "it will be much profit to him, wonderful though it is."

"Well," said the wren, "a present's a present. Folks with a living to get must give what they can afford."

. . . . .

It is not wise, as a rule, to sleep on the bare ground in December. But Young John awoke warm and jolly as a sandboy. He picked up his gun. It was bent and curiously twisted in the barrel. "Hallo!" said he, and peered closely into the short turf where it had lain. . . .

When he reached home his mother cried out joyfully, seeing his game-bag and how it bulged. She cried out to a different tune when he showed her what it con-

tained—clods and clumps of turf, matted over with a tiny close-growing plant that might have been any common moss for aught she knew (or recked) of the difference.

"But where are all the birds you promised me?"

He held out his gun—he had promised no birds, but that mattered nothing. His father took it to the lamp and glanced at it; put on his horn spectacles slowly, and peered at it. He was silent for a long while. Young John had turned inattentively from his mother's reproaches, and stood watching him.

The old man swung about at length. "When did ye contrive this?" he asked, rubbing the twist of the gun-barrel with his thumb. "And the forge not heated all this day!"

"We'll heat it to-night after supper," said Young John.

. . . . .

In the Church of Porthennis, up to twenty-five years ago, there stood a screen of ironwork—a marvel of arabesques and intricate traceries, with baskets of flowers, sea-monsters, Cherubim, tying the filigree-work and looping it together in knots and centres. One panel had for subject a spider midmost in a web, to visit which smiths came hundreds of miles, from all over the country, and wondered. For it was impossible to guess how iron had ever been beaten to such thinness or drawn so ductile. But unhappily—and priceless as was the secret Young John Cara had chosen to let die with him—the art of it was frail, frail as the titlark's song. His masterpiece, indeed, had in it the corruption of Celtic art. It could not endure its native weather,

and rusted away almost to nothingness. When the late Sir Gilbert Aubyn, the famous neo-Gothic architect, was called in (1885) to restore Porthennis Church—or, as we say in Cornwall, to "restroy" it—he swept the remnants away. But the legend survives, *ferro perennius*.

NOT HERE, O APOLLO!

A CHRISTMAS STORY HEARD AT MIDSUMMER

We sat and talked in the Vicarage garden overlooking Mount's Bay. The long summer day lingered out its departure, although the full moon was up and already touching with a faint radiance the towers on St. Michael's Mount—'the guarded Mount'—that rested as though at anchor in the silver-grey offing. The land-breeze had died down with sunset; the Atlantic lay smooth as a lake below us, and melted, league upon league, without horizon into the grey of night. Between the Vicar's fuchsia-bushes we looked down on it, we three—the Vicar, the Senior Tutor and I.

I think the twilit hour exactly accorded with our mood, and it did not need the scent of the Vicar's ten-week stocks, wafted across the garden, to touch a nerve of memory. For it was twenty years since we had last sat in this place and talked, and the summer night seemed to be laden with tranquil thoughts, with friendship and old regard. . . . Twenty years ago I had been an undergraduate, and had made one of a reading-party under the Senior Tutor, who annually in the Long Vacation brought down two or three fourth-year men to bathe and boat and read Plato with him, for no pay but their friendship: and, generation after generation, we young men had been made welcome in this garden by the Vicar, who happened to be an old

member of our College and (as in time I came to see) delighted to renew his youth in ours. There had been daughters, too, in the old days. . . . But they had married, and the Vicarage nest was empty long since.

The Senior Tutor, too, had given up work and retired upon his Fellowship. But every summer found him back at his old haunts; and still every summer brought a reading-party to the Cove, in conduct now of a brisk Junior Fellow, who had read with me in our time and achieved a "first." In short, things at the Cove were pretty much the same after twenty years, barring that a small colony of painters had descended upon it and made it their home. With them the undergraduates had naturally and quickly made friends, and the result was a cricket match — a grand Two-days' Cricket Match. They were all extremely serious about it, and the Oxford party—at their wits' end, no doubt, to make up a team against the Artists—had bethought themselves of me, who dwelt at the other end of the Duchy. They had written—they had even sent a two-page telegram—to me, who had not handled a bat for more years than I cared to count. It is delicious to be flattered by youth, especially for gifts you never possessed or possess no longer. I yielded and came. The season was Midsummer, or a little after; the weather golden and glorious.

We had drawn stumps after the first day's play, and the evening was to be wound up with a sing-song in the great tent erected—a marvel to the "Covers," or native fishermen—on the cricket-field. But I no longer take kindly to such entertainments; and so, after a bathe and a quiet dinner at the inn, it came into my mind to

take a stroll up the hill and along the cliffs, and pay an evening call on the old Vicar, wondering if he would remember me.

I found him in his garden. The Senior Tutor was there too—"the grave man, nicknamed Adam"—and the Vicar's wife, seated in a bee-hive straw chair, knitting. So we four talked happily for a while, until she left us on pretence that the dew was falling; and with that, as I have said, a wonderful silence possessed the garden fragrant with memories and the night-scent of flowers. . . .

Then I let fall the word that led to the Vicar's story. In old rambles, after long mornings spent with Plato, my eyes (by mirage, no doubt) had always found something Greek in the curves and colour of this coast; or rather, had felt the want of it. What that something was I could hardly have defined: but the feeling was always with me. It was as if at each bend of the shore I expected to find a temple with pillars, or a column crowning the next promontory; or, where the coast-track wound down to the little haven, to happen on a votive tablet erected to Poseidon or to "Helen's brothers, lucent stars"; nay, to meet with Odysseus' fisherman carrying an oar on his shoulder, or even, in an amphitheatre of the cliffs, to surprise Apollo himself and the Nine seated on a green plat whence a waterfall gushed down the coombe to the sandy beach . . . . This evening on my way along the cliffs—perhaps because I had spent a day bathing in sunshine in the company of white-flannelled youths—the old sensation had returned to haunt me. I spoke of it.

"'Not here, O Apollo——'" murmured the Senior Tutor.

"You quote against your own scepticism," said I. "The coast is right enough; it *is*

Where Helicon breaks down
In cliff to the sea.

It was made to invite the authentic gods—only the gods never found it out."

"Did they not?" asked the Vicar quietly. The question took us a little aback, and after a pause his next words administered another small shock. "One never knows," he said, "when, or how near, the gods have passed. One may be listening to us in this garden, to-night. . . . As for the Greeks——"

"Yes, yes, we were talking of the Greeks," the Senior Tutor (a convinced agnostic) put in hastily. "If we leave out Pytheas, no Greeks ever visited Cornwall. They are as mythical hereabouts as"—he hesitated, seeking a comparison—"as the Cornish wreckers; and *they* never existed outside of pious story-books."

Said the Vicar, rising from his garden-chair, "I accept the omen. Wait a moment, you two." He left us and went across the dim lawn to the house, whence by and by he returned bearing a book under his arm, and in his hand a candle, which he set down unlit upon the wicker table among the coffee-cups.

"I am going," he said, "to tell you something which, a few years ago, I should have scrupled to tell. With all deference to your opinions, my dear Dick, I doubt if they quite allow you to understand the clergy's horror of chancing a heresy; indeed, I doubt if either of you quite guess what a bridle a man comes to wear who preaches a hundred sermons or so every year to a rural parish, knowing that nine-tenths of his discourse will

assuredly be lost, while at any point in the whole of it he may be fatally misunderstood. . . . Yet as a man nears his end he feels an increasing desire to be honest, neither professing more than he knows, nor hiding any small article of knowledge as inexpedient to the Faith. The Faith, he begins to see, can take care of itself: for him, it is important to await his marching-orders with a clean breast. Eh, Dick?"

The Senior Tutor took his pipe from his mouth and nodded slowly.

"But what is your book?" he asked.

"My Parish Register. Its entries cover the years from 1660 to 1827. Luckily I had borrowed it from the vestry box, and it was safe on my shelf in the Vicarage on the Christmas Eve of 1870, the night when the church took fire. That was in my second year as incumbent, and before ever you knew these parts."

"By six months," said the Senior Tutor. "I first visited the Cove in July, 1871, and you were then beginning to clear the ruins. All the village talk still ran on the fire, with speculations on the cause of it."

"The cause," said the Vicar, "will never be known. I may say that pretty confidently, having spent more time in guessing than will ever be spent by another man. . . . But since you never saw the old church as it stood, you never saw the Heathen Lovers in the south aisle."

"Who were they?"

"They were a group of statuary, and a very strange one; executed, as I first believed, in some kind of wax —but, pushing my researches (for the thing interested me) I found the material to be a white soapstone that crops out here and there in the crevices of our serpen-

tine. Indeed, I know to a foot the spot from which the sculptor took it, close on two hundred years ago."

"It was of no great age, then?"

"No: and yet it bore all the marks of an immense age. For to begin with, it had stood five-and-twenty years in this very garden, exposed to all weathers, and the steatite (as they call it) is of all substances the most friable—is, in fact, the stuff used by tailors under the name of French chalk. Again, when, in 1719, my predecessor, old Vicar Hichens, removed it to the church and set it in the south aisle—or, at any rate, when he died and ceased to protect it—the young men of the parish took to using it for a hatstand, and also to carving their own and their sweethearts' names upon it during sermon-time. The figures of the sculpture were two; a youth and a maid, recumbent, and naked but for a web of drapery flung across their middles; and they lay on a roughly carved rock, over which the girl's locks as well as the drapery were made to hang limp, as though dripping with water. . . . One thing more I must tell you, risking derision; that to my ignorance the sculpture proclaimed its age less by these signs of weather and rough usage than by the simplicity of its design, its proportions, the chastity (there's no other word) of the two figures. They were classical, my dear Dick—what was left of them; Greek, and of the best period."

The Senior Tutor lit a fresh pipe, and by the flare of the match I saw his eyes twinkling.

"Praxiteles," he jerked out, between the puffs, "and in the age of Kneller! But proceed, my friend."

"And do you wait, my scoffer!" The Vicar borrowed the box of matches, lit the candle—which held a steady

flame in the still evening air—opened the book, and laid it on his knee while he adjusted his spectacles. "The story is here, entered on a separate leaf of the Register and signed by Vicar Hichens' own hand. With your leave—for it is brief—I am going to read it through to you. The entry is headed:

'*Concerning a group of Statuary now in the S. aisle of Lezardew Pish Church: set there by me in witness of God's Providence in operation, as of the corruption of man's heart, and for a warning to sinners to amend their ways.*

'In the year 1694, being the first of my vicariate, there lived in this Parish as hind to the farmer of Vellancoose a young man exceeding comely and tall of stature, of whom (when I came to ask) the people could tell me only that his name was Luke, and that as a child he had been cast ashore from a foreign ship; they said, a Portugal ship. [But the Portugals have swart complexions and are less than ordinary tall, whereas this youth was light-coloured and only brown by sunburn.] Nor could he tell me anything when I questioned him concerning his haveage [1]; which I did upon report that he was courting my housemaiden Grace Pascoe, an honest good girl, whom I was loth to see waste herself upon an unworthy husband. Upon inquiry I could not discover this Luke to be any way unworthy, saving that he was a nameless man and a foreigner and a backward church-goer. He told me with much simplicity that he could not remember to have had any parents; that Farmer Lowry had brought him up from the time he was shipwrecked and ever treated him kindly; and that, as for church-going, he had thought little about it, but would amend in this matter if it would give me pleasure. Which I thought a strange answer. When I went on to hint at his inclination for Grace Pascoe, he confused me by asking, with a look

[1] Lineage, descent.

very straight and good-natured, if the girl had ever spoken to me on the matter; to which I was forced to answer that she had not. So he smiled, and I could not further press him.

'Yet in my mind they would have made a good match; for the girl too was passing well-featured, and this Luke had notable gifts. He could read and write. The farmer spoke well of him, saying, "He has rewarded me many times over. Since his coming, thanks to the Lord, my farm prospers: and in particular he has a wonderful way with the beasts. Cattle or sheep, fowls, dogs, the wild things even, come to him almost without a call." He had also (the farmer told me) a wonderful knack of taking clay or mud and moulding it with his hands to the likeness of living creatures, of all sorts and sizes. In the kitchen by the great fire he would work at these images by hours together, to the marvel of everyone: but when the image was made, after a little while he always destroyed it; nor was it ever begged by anyone for a gift, there being a belief that, being fashioned by more than a man's skill, such things could only bring ill-luck to the possessors of them.

'For months then I heard no more of Grace Pascoe's lover: nor (though he now came every Sunday to church) did I ever see looks pass between the Vicarage pew (where she sat) and the Vellancoose pew (where he). But at the end of the year she came to me and told me she had given her word to a young farmer of Goldsithney, John Magor by name. In a worldly way this was a far better match for her than to take a nameless and landless man. Nor knew I anything against John Magor beyond some stray wildness natural to youth. He came of clean blood. He was handsome, almost as the other; tall, broad of chest, a prize-winner at wrestling-matches; and of an age when a good wife is usually a man's salvation.

'I called their banns, and in due time married them. On the wedding-day, after the ceremony, I returned from church

to find the young man Luke awaiting me by my house-door; who very civilly desired me to walk over to Vellancoose with him, which I did. There, taking me aside to an unused linhay, he showed me the sculpture, telling me (who could not conceal my admiration) that he had meant it for John and Grace Magor (as she now was) for a wedding-gift, but that the young woman had cried out against it as immodest and, besides, unlucky. On the first count I could understand her rejecting such a gift; for the folk of these parts know nothing of statuary and count all nakedness immodest. Indeed, I wondered that the bridegroom had not taken Luke's freedom in ill part, and I said so: to which he answered, smiling, that no man ever quarrelled with him or could quarrel. "And now, sir," he went on, "my apprenticeship is up, and I am going on a long journey. Since you find my group pleasing I would beg you to accept it, or—if you had liefer—to keep it for me until I come again, as some day I shall." "I do not wonder," said I, "at your wish to leave Lezardew Parish for the world where, as I augur, great fortune awaits you." He smiled again at this and said that, touching his future, he had neither any hope nor any fear: and again he pressed me to accept the statuary. For a time I demurred, and in the end made it a condition that he altered the faces somewhat, concealing the likeness to John and Grace Magor: and to this he consented. "Yet," said he, "it will be the truer likeness when the time comes."

'He was gone on the morrow by daybreak, and late that afternoon the farmer brought me the statuary in his hay-wagon. I had it set in the garden by the great filberd-tree, and there it has stood for near five-and-twenty years. (I ought to say that he had kept his promise of altering the faces, and thereby to my thinking had defaced their beauty: but beneath this defacement I still traced their first likeness.)

'Now to speak of the originals. My way lying seldom by Goldsithney, I saw little of John and Grace Magor during

the next few years, and nothing at all of them after they had left Goldsithney (their fortunes not prospering) and rented a smaller farm on the coast southward, below Rosudgeon: but what news came to me was ever of the same tenour. Their marriage had brought neither children nor other blessings. There were frequent quarrels, and the man had yielded to drinking; the woman, too, it was reported. She, that had been so trim a serving-maid, was become a slut with a foul tongue. They were cruelly poor with it all; for money does not always stick to unclean hands. I write all this to my reproach as well as to theirs, for albeit they dwelt in another parish it had been my Christian duty to seek them out. I did not, and I was greatly to blame.

'To pass over many years and come to the 2nd of December last (1718). That night, about 11 o'clock, I sat in my library reading. It was blowing hard without, the wind W.N.W.; but I had forgotten the gale in my book, when a sound, as it were a distant outcry of many voices, fetched me to unbar the shutters and open the window to listen. The sound, whatever it was, had died away: I heard but the wind roaring and the surf on the beaches along the Bay: and I was closing the window again when, close at hand, a man's voice called to me to open the front door. I went out to the hall, where a lamp stood, and opened to him. The light showed me the young man Luke, on whom I had not set eyes for these four-and-twenty years: nor, amazed and perturbed as I was, did it occur to me as marvellous that he had not aged a day. "There is a wreck," said he, "in the Porth below here; and you, sir, are concerned in it. Will you fetch a lantern and come with me?" He put this as a question, but in his tone was a command: and when I brought the lantern he took it from me and led the way. We struck across the Home Parc southward, thence across Gew Down and the Leazes, and I knew that he was making for the track which leads down to the sea by Prah Sands. At the entry of the track he took off his

coat and wrapped the lantern in it, though just there its light would have been most useful, or so I thought. But he led the way easily, and I followed with scarce a stumble. "We shall not need it," he said; "for see, there they are!" pointing to a small light that moved on the sands below us. "But who are they?" I asked. He strode down ahead of me, making swiftly for the light, and coming upon them in the noise of the gale we surprised a man and a woman, who at first cowered before us and then would have cast down their light and run. But my companion, unwrapping the lantern, held it high and so that the light shone on their faces. They were John Magor and his wife Grace.

'Then I, remembering what cry of shipwrecked souls had reached to my library in the Vicarage, and well guessing what work these wretches had been at, lifted my voice to accuse them. But the young man Luke stepped between us, and said he to them gently, "Come, and I will show what you seek." He went before us for maybe two hundred yards to the northern end of the beach, they behind him quaking, and I shepherding them in my righteous wrath. "Behold you," said he, and again lifted the lantern over a rock dark with seaweed (and yet the weed shone in the light) —"Behold you, what you have wrecked."

'On their backs along the flat of the rock lay two naked bodies, of a youth and a maid, half-clasped one to another. He handed me the lantern for a better look, and in the rays of it the two wretches peered forward as if drawn against their will. I cannot well say if they or I first perceived the miracle; that these corpses, as they lay in the posture, so bore the very likeness of the two lovers on my sculptured slab. But I remember that, as John and Grace Magor screamed back and clung to me, and as by the commotion of them clutching at my knees the lantern fell and was extinguished, I heard the young man Luke say, "Yourselves, yourselves!"

'I called to him to pick up the lantern; but he did not answer, and the two clinging wretches encumbered me. After a long while the clouds broke and the moon shone through them; and where he had stood there was no one. Also the slab of rock was dark, and the two drowned corpses had vanished with him. I pointed to it; but there was no tinder-box at hand to light the lantern again, and in the bitter weather until the dawn the two clung about me, confessing and rehearsing their sins.

'I have great hopes that they are brought to a better way of life; and because (repent they never so much) no one is any longer likely to recognise in these penitents the originals upon whom it was moulded these many years ago, I am determined to move the statuary to a place in the S. aisle of our parish church, as a memorial, the moral whereof I have leave of John and Grace Magor to declare to all the parish. I choose to defer making it public, in tenderness, while they live: for all things point as yet to the permanent saving of their souls. But, as in the course of nature I shall predecease them, I set the record here in the Parish Register, as its best place.

'(*Signed*) MALACHI HICHENS, B.D.

'21*st Jan.*, 1719.'"

"And is that all?" I asked.

"Yes and no," said the Vicar, closing the book. "It is all that Mr. Hichens has left to help us: and you may or may not connect with it what I am going to relate of my own experience. . . . The old church, as you know, was destroyed by fire in the morning hours of Christmas Day, 1870. Throughout Christmas Eve and for a great part of the night it had been snowing, but the day broke brilliantly, on a sky without wind or cloud; and never have my eyes seen anything so terribly

beautiful—ay, so sublime—as the sight which met them at the lych-gate. The old spire—which served as a sea-mark for the fishermen, and was kept regularly white-washed that it might be the more conspicuous—glittered in the morning sunshine from base to summit, as though matching its whiteness against that of the snow-laden elms: and in this frame of pure silver-work, burning without noise and with scarcely any smoke—this by reason of the excessive dryness of the woodwork—the church stood one glowing vault of fire. There was indeed so little smoke that at the first alarm, looking from my bedroom window, I had been incredulous; and still I wondered rather than believed, staring into this furnace wherein every pillar, nook, seat or text on the wall was distinctly visible, the south windows being burnt out and the great door thrown open and on fire.

"There was no entrance possible here, or indeed anywhere: but, being half-distraught, I ran around to the small door of the north aisle. This, too, was on fire—or, rather, was already consumed; and you will say that I must have been wholly distraught when I tell you what I saw, looking in through the aperture through which it would have been death to pass. I saw *him.*"

"You saw the young man Luke?" I asked, as he paused, inviting a word.

"He was standing by the stone figures within the porch. . . . And they crumbled—crumbled before my eyes in the awful heat. But he stood scatheless. He was young and comely; the hair of his head was not singed. He was as one of the three that walked in the midst of Nebuchadnezzar's furnace. . . . When the

stone slab was crumbled to a handful of dust, he moved up the aisle and was gone. . . . That is all: but, as you accept your friend for a truthful man, explain, O sceptic!"

—And again there fell a silence in the garden.

FIAT JUSTITIA RUAT SOLUM

In the days of my childhood, and up to the year 1886, the Justices of the Peace for the Gantick Division of the Hundred of Powder, in the county of Cornwall, held their Petty Sessions at Scawns, a bleak, four-square building set on the knap of a windy hill, close beside the high road that leads up from the sea to the market town of Tregarrick. The house, when the county in Quarter Sessions purchased it to convert it into a police station and petty sessional court, had been derelict for twenty years—that is to say, ever since the winter of 1827, when Squire Nicholas, the last owner to reside in it (himself an ornament in his time of the Gantick Bench), broke his neck in the hunting field. With his death, the property passed to some distant cousin in the North, who seldom visited Cornwall. This cousin leased the Scawns acres to a farmer alongside of whose fields they marched, and the farmer, having no use for the mansion, gladly sub-let it. The county authorities, having acquired the lease, did indeed make certain structural adaptations, providing tolerable quarters for the local constabulary, with a lock-up in the cellarage (which was commodious), but apart from this did little to arrest the general decay of the building. In particular, the disrepair of the old dining-room, where the magistrates now held Session, had become a public scandal. The old wall-paper dropped in

tatters, the ceiling showed patches where the plaster had broken from the battens, rats had eaten holes in the green baize table-cloth, and the whole place smelt of dry-rot. From the wall behind the magistrates' table, in the place where nations more superstitious than ours suspend a crucifix, an atrocious portrait of the late Squire Nicholas surveyed the desolated scene of his former carousals. An inscription at the base of the frame commemorated him as one who had consistently" Done Right to all manner of People after the Laws and Usages of the Realm, without Fear or Favour, Affection or Ill-will."

Beneath this portrait, on the second Wednesday in June, 1886, were gathered no fewer than six Justices of the Peace, a number the more astonishing because Petty Sessions chanced to clash with the annual meeting of the Royal Cornwall Agricultural Society, held that year at the neighbouring market town of Tregarrick. Now, the reason of this full bench was at once simple and absurd, and had caused merriment not unmixed with testiness in the magistrates' private room. Each Justice, counting on his neighbour's delinquency, had separately resolved to pay a sacrifice to public duty, and to drop in to dispose of the business of Sessions before proceeding to the Show. The charge-sheet, be it noted, was abnormally light: it comprised one single indictment.

"Good Lord!" growled Admiral Trist, Chairman of the Bench, Master of the famous Gantick Harriers. "Six of us to hear a case of sleeping out!"

"Who's the defendant?" asked Sir Felix Felix-Williams. "'Thomas Edwards'—Don't know the name in these parts."

"I doubt if he knows it himself, Sir Felix," answered Mr. Batty, the Justices' Clerk. "The Inspector tells me it's a tramping fellow the police picked up two nights ago. He has been in lock-up ever since."

"Then why the devil couldn't they have sent round and fished up one of us—or a couple—to deal with the case out of hand?"

"Damned shame, the way the police nurse this business!" murmured Lord Rattley, our somewhat disreputable local peer. "They're wanted at Tregarrick to-day, and, what's more, they want the fun of the Show. So they take excellent care to keep the charge-list light. But since Petty Sessions must be held, whether or no, they pounce on some poor devil of a tramp to put a face on the business."

"H'm, h'm." The Admiral, friend of law and order, dreaded Lord Rattley's tongue, which was irresponsible and incisive. "Well, if this is our only business, gentlemen——"

"There *is* another case, sir," put in Mr. Batty. "Wife—Trudgian by name—wants separation order. Application reached me too late to be included in the list."

"Trudgian?" queried Parson Voisey. "Not Selina Magor, I hope, that married young Trudgian a year or so back? Husband a clay-labourer, living somewhere outside Tregarrick."

"That's the woman. Young married couple—first quarrel. The wife, on her own admission, had used her tongue pretty sharply, and, I don't doubt, drove the man off to the public-house, where he sat until sulky-drunk. A talking-to by the Chairman, if I might suggest——"

"Yes, yes," agreed Parson Voisey. "And I'll have

a word with Selina afterwards. She used to attend my Young Women's Class—one of my most satisfactory girls."

"We'll see—we'll see," said the Admiral. "Are we ready, gentlemen?"

He led the way into Court, where all rose in sign of respect—Mr. Batty's confidential clerk, the Inspector, a solitary constable, a tattered old man in the constable's charge, and the two Trudgians. These last occupied extreme ends of the same form; the husband sullen, with set jaw and eyes obstinately fixed on his boots, the young wife flushed of face and tearful, stealing from time to time a defiant glance at her spouse.

In face of this scanty audience the six Justices solemnly took their seats.

"Thomas Edwards!" called the Clerk.

The tattered old man cringed up to the table, with an embarrassed smile, which yet had a touch of impudence about the corners of the mouth.

"Thomas Edwards, you stand charged for that on a certain date, to wit, June 6th, you, not having any visible means of subsistence, and not giving a good account of yourself, were found lodging in a certain outhouse known as Lobb's Barn, in the Parish of Gantick, contrary, etc. Do you plead Guilty or Not Guilty?"

"Guilty, y'r Worships."

The constable, on a nod from the Inspector, cleared his throat, and stated the charge: "On the 6th instant, y'r Worships, at 10.45 in the evening, being on duty in the neighbourhood of Lobb's Barn," etc. Defendant, on being arrested, had used the filthiest language, and had for some time stoutly resisted being marched off to the lock-up.

"That will do," the Chairman interrupted. "You, Edwards—if that's your real name——"

"It'll do for this job," put in the prisoner.

"Very well. Have you anything to say?"

The prisoner ran his eye along the array of Justices.

"Seems a lot o' dogs for one bone!"

The Admiral stiffened with wrath, and the crimson of his face deepened as Lord Rattley threw himself back in his chair, laughing.

"Forty shillings, or a month!"

"Oh, come—I say!" Lord Rattley murmured.

The Admiral, glancing to right and left, saw, too, that three or four of his colleagues were lifting their eyebrows in polite protest.

"I—I beg your pardon, gentlemen, for not consulting you! Correct me, if you will. I would point out, however, that in addition to the offence with which he is charged, this fellow was guilty of violent and disgusting language, and, further, of resisting the police."

But his colleagues made no further protest, and Thomas Edwards, having but two coppers to his name, was conducted below to the cellarage, there to await transference to the County Jail.

"Selina Trudgian!"

The Admiral, viewing the young couple as they stood sheepishly before him, commanded Selina to state her complaint as briefly as possible, avoiding tears.

But this was beyond her.

"He came home drunk, your Worship," she sobbed, twisting her handkerchief.

"I didn'," corrected her husband.

"He came home d-drunk, your Worship . . . he c-came home d-drunk——"

"Now hearken to me, you two!"

The Admiral, fixing a severe eye on them, started to read them a lesson on married life, with its daily discipline, its constant obligation of mutual forbearance. For a confirmed bachelor, he did it remarkably well; but it must be recorded that this was not by any means his first essay in lecturing discordant spouses from the Bench. Lord Rattley, whose own matrimonial ventures had been (like Mr. Weller's researches in London) extensive and peculiar, leaned back and followed the discourse with appreciation, his elbows resting on the arms of his chair, his finger-tips delicately pressed together, his gaze pensively tracking the motions of a bumble-bee that had strayed in at an open window and was battering its head against the dusty pane of a closed one.

Just then the Admiral, warming to his theme, pushed back his chair a few inches. . . .

For some days previously a stream of traction-engines had passed along the high road, dragging timber-wagons, tent-wagons, machinery, exhibits of all kinds, towards the Tregarrick Show. This heavy traffic (it was afterwards surmised) had helped what Wordsworth calls "the unimaginable touch of Time," shaking the dry-rotted joists of Scawns House, and preparing the catastrophe.

The Admiral was a heavy-weight. He rode, in those days, at close upon seventeen stone. As he thrust back his chair, there came from the floor beneath—from the wall immediately behind him—an ominous, rending sound. The hind legs of his chair sank slowly, the seat of justice tilted farther and farther; as he clutched

wildly at the table, the table began to slide upon him, and with an uproar of cracking timber, table, chairs, magistrates, clerks, together, in one burial blent, were shot downwards into the cellarage.

The Inspector—a tall man—staggering to his feet as the table slid from him into the chasm, leapt and clutched a crazy chandelier that depended above him. His weight tore it bodily from the ceiling, with a torrential downrush of dust and plaster, sweeping him over the edge of the gulf and overwhelming the Trudgians, husband and wife, on the brink of it.

At this moment the constable, fresh from locking up Thomas Edwards below, returned, put his head in at the door, gasped at sight of a devastation which had swallowed up every human being, and with great presence of mind, ran as hard as he could pelt for the hamlet of High Lanes, half a mile away, to summon help.

Now the Inspector, as it happened, was unhurt. Picking himself up, digging his heels into the moraine of plaster, and brushing the grit from his eyes, he had the pleasure of recognising Lord Rattley, the Parson, Mr. Humphry Felix-Williams (son of Sir Felix), and Mr. Batty, as they scrambled forth successively, black with dust but unhurt, save that the Parson had received a slight scalp-wound. Then Mr. Humphry caught sight of a leg clothed in paternal shepherd's-plaid, and tugged at it until Sir Felix was restored, choking, to the light of day—or rather, to the Cimmerian gloom of the cellarage, in which an unexpected figure now confronted them.

It was the prisoner, Thomas Edwards. A collapsing beam had torn away some bricks from the wall of his

cell, and he came wriggling through the aperture, using the most dreadful oaths.

"Stir yourselves—— Oh, ——, ——, stir yourselves! Standin' there like a —— lot of stuck pigs! Get out the Admiral! The Admiral, I tell you! . . . . Hark to the poor old devil, damnin' away down ther, wi' two hundredweight o' table pressin' against his belly!"

Mr. Edwards, in fact, used an even more vulgar word. But he was not stopping to weigh words. Magistrates, Inspector, Clerk—he took charge of them all on the spot—a master of men. The Admiral, in the unfathomed dark of the cellar, was indeed uttering language to make your hair creep.

"Oh, cuss away, y' old varmint!" sang down Mr. Edwards cheerfully. "The louder you cuss, the better the hearin'; 'means ye have air to breathe an' nothin' broke internal. . . . Eh? Oh, *I* knows th' old warrior! Opened a gate for en once when he was out hare-huntin', up St. Germans way—I likes a bit o' sport, I do, when I happens on it. Lord love ye, the way he damned my eyes for bein' slow about it! . . . Aye, aye, Admiral! Cuss away, cuss away—proper quarter-deck you're givin' us! But we're gettin' to you fast as we can. . . . England can't spare the likes o' you—an' she won't, not if we can help it!"

The man worked like a demon. What is more, he was making the others work, flailing them all—peer and baronet and parson—with slave-driver's oaths, while they tugged to loosen the timbers under which the magistrates' table lay wedged.

"Lift, I tell ye! Lift! . . . What the ——'s wrong with that end o' the beam? Stuck, is it? Jammed? Jammed your grandmothers! Nobbut a few pounds o'

loose lime an' plaster beddin' it. Get down on your knees an' clear it. . . . That's better! And now pull! PULL, I say! Oh, not *that* way, you rabbits!—here, let me show you!"

By efforts Herculean, first digging the rubbish clear with clawed hands, then straining and heaving till their loins had almost cracked, they levered up the table at length, and released not only the Admiral, but the two remaining magistrates, whom they found pinned under its weight, one unharmed, but in a swoon, the other moaning feebly with the pain of two broken ribs.

"Whew! What the devil of a smell of brandy!" observed Lord Rattley, mopping his brow in the intervals of helping to hoist the rescued ones up the moraine. At the top of it, the Inspector, lifting his head above the broken flooring to shout for help, broke into furious profanity; for there, in the empty court-room, stood young Trudgian and his wife, covered, indeed, with white dust, but blissfully wrapt in their own marvellous escape; and young Trudgian for the moment was wholly preoccupied in probing with two fingers for a piece of plaster which had somehow found its way down his Selina's back between the nape of the neck and the bodice.

"Drop it, you fool, and lend a hand!" objurgated the Inspector; whereupon Mrs. Trudgian turned about, bridling.

"You leave my Tom alone, please! A man's first call is on his wedded wife, I reckon."

The rescued magistrates were lifted out, carried forth into fresh air, and laid on the turf by the wayside to recover somewhat while the rescuers again wiped perspiring brows.

"A thimbleful o' brandy might do the Admiral good," suggested the prisoner.

"Brandy?" cried Lord Rattley. "The air reeks of brandy! Where the——?"

"The basement's swimmin' with it, m' lord." The fellow touched his hat. "Two casks stove by the edge o' the table. I felt around the staves, an' counted six others, hale an' tight. Thinks I, 'tis what their Worships will have been keepin' for private use, between whiles. Or elst——"

"Or else?"

"Or else maybe we've tapped a private cellar."

Lord Rattley slapped his thigh.

"A *cache*, by Jove! Old Squire Nicholas—I remember, as a boy, hearing it whispered he was hand-in-glove with the Free Trade."

The prisoner touched his hat humbly.

"This bein' a magistrates' matter, m' lord, an' me not wishin' to interfere——"

"Quite so." Lord Rattley felt in his pockets. "You have done us a considerable service, my man, and—er—that bein' so——"

"Forty shillin' it was. *He's* cheap at it"—with a nod towards the Admiral. "A real true-blue old English gentleman! You can always tell by their conversations."

"The fine shall be paid."

"I counted six casks, m' lord, so well as I could by the feel——"

"Yes, yes! And here's a couple of sovereigns for yourself—all I happen to have in my pocket——"

Lord Rattley bustled off to the house for brandy.

"England's old England, hows'ever you strike it!" chirruped the prisoner gleefully, and touched his fore-

head again. "See you at the Show, m' lord, maybe? 'Will drink your lordship's health there, anyway."

He skipped away up the road towards Tregarrick. In the opposite direction young Mr. and Mrs. Trudgian could be seen just passing out of sight, he supporting her with his arm, pausing every now and then, bending over her uxoriously.

THE HONOUR OF THE SHIP

I

"'Erbert 'Enery Bates!"

"Wot cheer!"

It was the morning of Speech-day on board the Industrial Training Ship *Egeria*—July the 31st, to be precise. At 3 p.m. Sir Felix Felix-Williams, Baronet, would arrive to distribute the prizes. He would be attended by a crowd of ladies and gentlemen; and the speeches, delivered beneath an awning on the upper deck, would be fully reported next day in the local newspapers. The weather was propitious.

Just now (11 a.m.) some half a dozen of the elder boys, attired in dirty white dungaree and barefooted, were engaged in swabbing out what, in her sea-going days, had been the *Egeria's* ward-room, making ready to set out tables for an afternoon tea to follow the ceremony. They were nominally under supervision of the ship's Schoolmaster, who, however, had gone off to unpack a hamper of flowers—the gift of an enthusiastic subscriber.

"Step this way, 'Erbert 'Enery Bates."

"You go to hell, Link Andrew!" But the boy stopped his work and faced about, nevertheless.

"See this flag?" Link Andrew dived his long arms into a pile of bunting that lay ready for decorating the tea-room. "Wot is it?"

"Union Jack o' course, you silly rotter!"

"Oh, you good, good boy! . . . Yes, dear lads," went on Link Andrew, in a mimicking voice, "it is indeed the meet-your-flag of our 'oly Motherland, and 'Erbert 'Enery Bates, our Good Conduck Medallist, will now oblige by going down on his knees and kissing it. Else I'll put an eye on him!"

Master Bates—"Good Conduct Bates"—stepped forward, with his fists up. He was something of a sneak and a sucker-up, yet by no means a coward. He advanced bravely enough, although he knew that Link Andrew—the best boxer in the ship—was provoking him of set purpose.

The rest of the boys liked Link and disliked Bates; yet their sense of fair play told them that Link was putting himself in the wrong; and yet again, despite their natural eagerness to see a fight, they wanted to save Link from what could but end in folly. He was playing for a fall.

"Here comes Schoolmaster!" shouted one, at a venture.

At that moment, indeed, the Schoolmaster appeared in the doorway.

"What's this noise about?" he demanded. "You, Link Andrew? I thought your interest was to avoid trouble for twenty-four hours."

II

By the Industrial Schools Act of 1866, 29 & 30 Vict. c. 118, it is ordained that any youngster apparently under the age of fourteen found begging, or wandering destitute, or consorting with thieves, or obstinately playing

truant from school, or guilty of being neglected by his parents, or of defying his parents, or of having a parent who has incurred a sentence of penal servitude—may by any two justices be committed to a certified Industrial School, there to be detained until he reaches the age of sixteen, or for a shorter term if the Justices shall so direct. Such an Industrial School was the ex-battleship *Egeria*.

She had carried seventy-four guns in her time; and though gunless now and jury-masted, was redolent still of the Nelson period from her white-and-gold figure-head to the beautiful stern galleries which Commander Headworthy had adorned with window-boxes of Henry Jacoby geraniums. The Committee in the first flush of funds had spared no pains to reproduce the right atmosphere, and in that atmosphere Commander Headworthy laudably endeavoured to train up his crew of graceless urchins, and to pass them out at sixteen, preferably into the Navy or the Merchant Service, but at any rate as decent members of society. Nor were the boys' nautical experiences entirely stationary, since a wealthy sympathiser (lately deceased) had bequeathed his fine brigantine yacht to serve the ship as a tender and take a few score of the elder or more privileged lads on an annual summer cruise, that they might learn something of practical seamanship.

The yacht—by name the *Swallow*—an old but shapely craft of some two hundred tons, lay just now a short cable's length from the parent ship, with sails bent and all ready for sea; for by custom the annual cruise started on the day next after the prize-giving.

The question was: Would Link Andrew be allowed to go?

He would have sold his soul to go. He even meditated ways of suicide if the Commander, for a punishment, should veto his going. During the last three weeks he had run up an appalling tally of black marks, and yet it was generally agreed that the Commander would relent if Link would only keep his temper and behave with common prudence for another twenty-four hours.

But this was just what Link seemed wholly unable to do. He hated the ship, the officers, everything in life; and the hot July weather worked upon this hatred until it became a possessing fury.

III

At dinner-time he very nearly wrecked his chance for good and all.

Shortly before noon a diminutive, mild-looking gentleman, noticeable for his childlike manner and a pair of large round spectacles, came alongside the *Egeria* in a shore-boat. It appeared that he bore a visitor's ticket for the afternoon function and had arrived thus early by invitation of one of the Committee to take a good look over the ship before the proceedings began. Apparently, too, the Committee-man had sent Commander Headworthy no warning—to judge from that officer's wrathful face and the curt tone in which he invited his visitor to luncheon.

The mild-looking gentleman—who gave his name as Harris — declined courteously, averring that he had brought a sandwich with him. The Commander thereupon turned him over to the Second Officer under whose somewhat impatient escort Mr. Harris made a thorough

tour of the ship, peering into everything and asking a number of questions. The boys—whom he amused by opening a large white umbrella, green-lined, to shield him from the noonday sun on the upper deck—promptly christened him "Moonface."

This Mr. Harris, still in charge of the Second Officer, happened along the gun-deck as they finished singing "*Be present at our table, Lord,*" and were sitting down to dinner. From their places they marched up one by one, each with his dinner-basin, to have it filled at the head of the table.

"Hallo, you, Andrew!" called out the Second Officer. "Fetch that basin along here. I want the gentleman to have a look at the ship's food."

Link came forward, stretched out a long arm, and thrust the basin under the visitor's nose.

"Perhaps," said he, "the toff would like a sniff at the same time? There's Sweet Williams for a summer's day!"

"There, that'll do, Link! Go to your place, my lad, and don't be insolent," said the Second Officer hastily, with a nervous glance at Mr. Harris.

But Mr. Harris merely blinked behind his glasses.

"Yes, yes, to be sure," he agreed. "Pork *is* tricky diet in such weather as we're having!"

IV

Half an hour later, having detached himself gently from his escort, Mr. Harris wandered back to the upper deck. It appeared to be deserted; and Mr. Harris, unfolding his umbrella against the sun's rays, wandered at will.

In the waist of the vessel, on the port side, he came upon a dais and a baize-covered table with an awning rigged over them; and upon the ship's Schoolmaster, who was busily engaged in arranging the prize-books.

"Good afternoon, sir!" The Schoolmaster, affecting to be busy and polite at the same time, picked out a book and held it up to view. "*Smiles on Self Help*," he announced.

"You don't say so!" answered Mr. Harris, halting. "But—I mean—they can't very well, can they?"

"*Eric, or Little by Little*, by the late Archdeacon Farrar. My choice, sir: some light, you see, and others solid, but all *pure* literature. . . . They value it, too, in after life. Ah, sir, they've a lot of good in 'em! There's many worse characters than my boys walking the world."

Mild Mr. Harris removed his glasses.

"Are you talking like that from force of habit?" he asked. "If so, I shall not be so much annoyed."

The Schoolmaster was fairly taken aback. He stared for a moment and shifted his helm, so to speak, with a grin of intelligence and a short laugh.

"Not quite so bad as that, sir," he remonstrated. "It's—it's—well, you may call it the *atmosphere*. On Speech-day the ship fairly reeks of it."

"And, like the pork, eh! it's just a little bit 'off'?" suggested the visitor, returning his smile. "By the way, I want to ask you a question or two about a boy. His name is Link—Something-or-other."

"Link Andrew?" The Schoolmaster gave him a quick look. "You don't tell me he's in trouble again? Not been annoying you, sir, I hope?"

"On the contrary, I've taken a fancy to the lad; and, by the way again, Link can't be his real name?"

"Short for Abraham Lincoln, as baptised," explained the Schoolmaster. "At least, that's one theory. According to another it's short for 'Missing Link.' Not that the boy's bad-looking; but did you happen to notice the length of his arms—like a gorilla's?"

"I could not avoid doing so."

Mr. Harris related the incident.

"It was exceedingly kind of you, sir, to pass over his conduct so lightly. The fact is, if Link Andrew had been reported again he'd have lost his hammock in the yacht. We all want him to go; some to get rid of him for a spell, and others because we can't help liking the boy. He hates us back, you bet, and has hated us from the moment he set foot on deck, five years ago . . . Whitechapel-reared, I believe. . . . Yet fond of the sea in his way. Once shipped on the yacht he'll behave like an angel. But here on board he's like a young beast in a trap."

V

Mr. Harris mooned away to the poop-deck, from the rail of which he watched the guests arriving. As Sir Felix's gig was descried putting off from the shore, the boys swarmed up the ratlines and out on the yards, where they dressed ship very prettily. A brass band in the waist hailed his approach with the strains of "Rule, Britannia!" At the head of the accommodation-ladder a guard of honour welcomed him with a hastily rehearsed "Present Arms!" and the boys aloft accom-

panied it with three shrill British cheers. The dear old gentleman gazed up and around him, and positively beamed.

By this time a crowd of boats had put off, and soon the guests came pouring up the ladder in a steady stream. There were ladies in picture hats. A reporter stood by the gangway taking notes of their costumes. They fell to uttering the prettiest exclamations upon the shipshapeness of everything on board. Mr. Harris saw the First Officer inviting numbers of them to lean over the bulwarks and observe a scar the old ship had received —or so he alleged—at Trafalgar. "How interesting!" they cried.

Well, to be sure, it was interesting. Nelson himself —there was good authority for this at any rate—had once stood on the *Egeria's* poop; had leaned, perhaps, against the very rail on which Mr. Harris's hand rested. . . . And the function went off very well. The boys clambered down upon deck again, the band played—

"'Tis a Fine Old English Gentleman,"

and all gathered about the awning. Sir Felix, nobly expansive in a buff waistcoat, cleared his throat and spoke of the Empire in a way calculated to bring tears to the eyes. The prize-giving followed.

As it proceeded, Mr. Harris stole down the poop-ladder and edged his way around the back of the crowd to the waist of the ship, where the boys were drawn up with a few officers interspersed to keep discipline. He arrived there just as Link Andrew returned from the dais with two books—the boxing and gymnasium prizes. The boy was foaming at the mouth.

"See, here—*Fights for the Flag!* And, on top of it,

Deeds What Won the Silly Empire! And the old blighter 'oped that I'd be a good boy, and grow up, and win some more. For the likes of *him*, he meant—Yuss, I *don't* think! . . . Oh, hold my little hand and check the tearful flow, for I'm to be a ship's boy at 'arf-a-crown a month, and go Empire buildin'!"

"There!" said Mr. Harris, indicating a coil of rope. "Sit down and have it out."

VI

Some five or six years later, Mr. Harris—who resides in a small West Country town, the name of which does not concern us—was seated in his library reading, when his parlourmaid brought him a card—"Mr. Wilkins, I.T.S. *Egeria*."

"I scarcely hoped that you would remember me, sir," began the Schoolmaster, on being introduced. "But, happening to pass through—on a holiday trip, a walking tour—I ventured to call and ask news of Link Andrew. You may remember our having a conversation about him once on board the *Egeria*?"

"I remember it perfectly," said Mr. Harris; "and you'll be glad to hear that Andrew is doing remarkably well; is saving money, in fact, and contemplates getting married."

"Indeed, sir, that is good hearing. I was afraid that he might have left your employment."

"So, to be sure, he has; taking with him, moreover, an excellent character. He is now a second gardener at a steady wage."

"You can't think, sir, how you relieve my mind.

To tell the truth, I met him, less than an hour ago; and by his manner . . . But I had better tell you how it happened: I knew, of course, that you had interested yourself in Link and found a job for him. But after he'd left the ship he never let us hear word of his doings. . . . Well, passing through your town just now, I ran up against him. He was coming along the street, and I recognised him on the instant; but all of a sudden he turned and began to stare in at a shop-window—an ironmonger's—giving me his back. I made sure, of course, that he hadn't spied me; so I stepped up and said I, 'Hallo, Link, my lad!' clapping a hand on his shoulder. He turned about, treated me to a long stare, and says he, 'Aren't you makin' some mistake, mister?' 'Why,' says I, 'surely I haven't changed so much as all that since the days I taught you vulgar fractions on board the old *Egeria*? I'm Mr. Wilkins,' says I. 'Oh, are you?' says he. 'Then, Mr. Wilkins, you can go back to hell and take 'em my compliments there.' That's all he said, and he walked away down the street."

"That's queer," said Mr. Harris, polishing his spectacles. "Yes, he came to me as gardener's boy —I thought it would be a pleasant change after the ship; and he served his apprenticeship well. I remember that in answer to my application the Secretary wrote: 'Of course we prefer to train our lads to the sea; but when one has no aptitude for it——'"

Mr. Harris paused, for the Schoolmaster was smiling broadly.

"Good Lord, sir!—if you'll excuse me. Link Andrew no aptitude for the sea! Why, that lad's seamanship saved my life once: and, what's more, it saved the

whole yacht's company! Hasn't he ever told you about it?"

"Not a word. I think," said Mr. Harris, "our friend Link chooses to keep his past in watertight compartments. Sit down and tell me about it."

VII

This was the Schoolmaster's story:

"It happened on that very cruise, sir. The *Swallow* had been knocking around at various West Country regattas—Weymouth, Torquay, Dartmouth, finishing up with Plymouth. From Plymouth we were to sail for home.

"We had dropped hook in the Merchant Shipping Anchorage, as they call it; which is the eastern side of the Sound, by Jennycliff Bay. That last day of the regattas—a Saturday—the wind had been almost true north, and freshish, but nothing to mention: beautiful sailing weather for the small boats. The big cracks had finished their engagements and were making back for Southampton.

"Well, as I say, this north wind was a treat; especially coming, as it did, after a week of light airs and calms that had spoilt most of the yacht-racing. Some time in the afternoon I heard talk that our skipper—well, I won't mention names—and, as it turned out in the end, everyone was implicated. Anyhow, at six o'clock or thereabouts the gig was ordered out, and every blessed officer on board went ashore in her; which was clean contrary to regulations, of course, but there happened to be a cinematograph show they all wanted to see at

the big music-hall—some prize-fight or other. I don't set much store by prize-fights for my part, and living pictures give me the headache: so, to salve everybody's conscience, I was left in sole charge of the ship.

"Everything went smooth as a buttered cake until about nine o'clock, when the wind, that had been dying down all the time, suddenly flew west and began to gather strength hand over fist. . . . I never, not being a seaman, could have believed—till I saw and felt it—the change that came over Plymouth Sound in the space of one half-hour. The gig had been ordered again for nine-thirty, to pull to the Barbican Steps and be ready at ten to bring the officers on board. But before nine-thirty I began to have my serious doubts about sending her. It was just as well I had.

"For by nine-forty-five it was blowing a real gale, and by ten o'clock something like a hurricane. Just then, to top my terror, Master Link Andrew came aft to me—the wind seemed to blow him along—and 'I beg your pardon, Mr. Wilkins,' said he, 'but in my opinion she's dragging.'

"Just think of it, sir! There was I, in sole charge of a hundred boys or so, and knowing no more what to do than the ship's cat. . . . She *was* dragging, too; sagging foot by foot in towards the dark of Jennycliff Bay.

"'If you'll take a word from me, sir,' said Link, 'we'd best up sail and get out of this.'

"'What about the other anchor?' I suggested.

"'Try it if you like,' said he. 'In my belief it won't hold any more than a tin mustard-pot.'

"Nor did it, when we let go. He came back after a few minutes from the darkness forward. 'No go,' said he. 'Nothing to do but slip and clear.'

"There was no question, either, that he spoke sense. 'But where?' I shouted at him. 'Drake's Island? . . . And who's to do it, even so?'

"'The anchorage is crowded under Drake's Island,' he shouted back. 'It's the devil-among-the-tailors we'd play there, if we ever fetched. . . . Breakwater's no shelter either.'

"He seemed to whistle to himself for a moment; and the next I heard him yell out sharply to the boys forward to tumble on the mainsail, strip her covers off, double-reef and hoist her. He took command from that moment. While a score of them flew to tackle this job, he beat his way forward and called on another lot to get out the staysail. Back he ran again, cursing and calling on all and sundry to look smart. Next he was at my side ordering me to unlash the wheel and stand by. 'It's touch-and-go, sir.'

"'Hadn't we better send up a flare?' I suggested feebly.

"'Flare your bloomin' grandmother!' From this moment I regret to say that Link Andrew treated me with contempt. He next ordered a dozen small boys aloft, to reef and set her upper square-sail. When I urged that it was as good as asking them to commit suicide, he cursed me openly. 'Drown the poor pups, will I? I thought—damn you all!—you laid yourselves out to breed seamen! You *say* you do, at prize-givings!' He ran forward again to get the hawsers buoyed before slipping them.

"I never remember a sound more sickening to the stomach than those chains made as they ran out through the hawse-holes. The one mistake Link committed was in ordering the upper square-sail to be reefed.

By the mercy of God not a child was blown off the yards in that operation; yet it was no sooner concluded than, having by this time found a megaphone, he shouted up to them to undo their work and shake out the reef.

"'That's madness!' I yelled from the wheel, where I clung dripping, blindly pressing down the spokes and easing them as he checked me. 'Look to leeward, you blighter!' he yelled back.

"The ship had payed off slowly, and while she gathered way, was drifting straight down upon an Italian barque that two hours ago had lain more than a cable's length from us. . . . I thought our lower yard—we heeled so—would have smacked against her bowsprit-end; and from the outcries on board the Italian I rather fancy her crew expected it. But we shaved her by a yard or so, as Link pushed me away from the wheel and took charge. A moment later she had dropped behind us into the night, and we were surging in full-tilt for Plymouth, heaving over at the Lord knows what angle.

"But we were off; we were clear; and, strange to say, the worst of it was over. The wind was worsening, if anything, and we continued to drive at a frightful angle. Now and again we slanted to a squall that fairly dipped us till the sea poured half-way across her decks. As I staggered forward—clutching at anything handy—to assure myself that none of the boys had been flung off the fore-yard and overboard, I heard a sea burst the starboard bulwarks, and in another moment, while I yet wondered if the sound came from something parting aloft, with a 'Wa-ay-oh!' Link had put over her helm, and the suddenly altered slant flung me into the scuppers, where I dropped after taking a knock against

the standing rigging, the mark of which I shall carry on my forehead till I die.

"By this time, sir, I was pretty well dazed. I forget if it was in a couple of short tacks, or in three, that we fetched Picklecombe Point on the western side. Then we put about on a long tack that carried us well outside the breakwater and came in for Cawsand Bay and safety. On this last fetch Link kicked me up and gave me the wheel again, while he went forward to hunt up the spare anchor.

"We brought up, well in shelter, at something before two in the morning, not a hand lost. Before anyone was allowed to turn in, Link had every sail stowed and covered—'for the honour of the blasted ship,' as he put it.

"The skipper and his precious lot came aboard next day not long before noon, and after a wholesome scare. It seems they were late, and all pretty so-so by the time they reached the Barbican Steps; and, let be that there was no boat for them, the watermen one and all declined to take them off in any such weather. Nothing for it but to doss the night ashore, which they did. But I wouldn't give much for their feelings next morning when they put off and, lo! there was no *Swallow* in the Merchant Shipping Anchorage. In Cawsand Bay, you understand, we were well hidden by the land, and it cost them at least a couple of hours to guess our whereabouts.

"Long as the time was, it wasn't enough to wear out the effects of the—well, the Cinematograph. A yellower set, or a bluer in the gills, you never set eyes on. They came aboard, and the skipper, having made some inquiries of me, called up Link, cleared his throat

quite in the old approved style, and began to make a speech.

"Link cut it short.

"'All right, my precious swine! Now step below and wash off the traces. If you behave pretty, maybe I'll not report you.'"

VIII

"That finished the lot," wound up the Schoolmaster. "There *was* no answer to it, if you come to think."

"And Link never told?"

"Never a word, sir. Nor did I. But the story leaked out somehow, and it gave the Commander the whip-hand of his Committee, to ship a new set of officers. Ship and tender, sir, the *Egeria* nowadays is something to be proud of. But for my part I don't go on any more of these summer cruises. The open sea never suited my stomach, and I prefer a walk for my holiday."

LIEUTENANT LAPENOTIÈRE

THE night-porter at the Admiralty had been sleeping in his chair. He was red-eyed and wore his livery coat buttoned at random. He grumbled to himself as he opened the great door.

He carried a glass-screened candle, and held it somewhat above the level of his forehead—which was protuberant and heavily pock-marked. Under the light he peered out at the visitor, who stood tall and stiff, with uniform overcoat buttoned to the chin, between the Ionic pillars of the portico.

"Who's there?"

"Lieutenant Lapenotière, of the *Pickle* schooner—with dispatches."

"Dispatches?" echoed the night-porter. Out beyond the screen of masonry that shut off the Board of Admiralty's fore-court from Whitehall, one of the tired post-horses started blowing through its nostrils on this foggy night.

"From Admiral Collingwood—Mediterranean Fleet off Cadiz—sixteen days," answered the visitor curtly. "Is everyone abed?"

"Admiral Collingwood? Why Admiral Collingwood?" The night-porter fell back a pace, opening the door a trifle wider. "Good God, sir! You don't say as how——"

"You can fetch down a Secretary or someone, I

hope?" said Lieutenant Lapenotière, quickly stepping past him into the long dim hall. "My dispatches are of the first importance. I have posted up from Falmouth without halt but for relays."

As the man closed the door, he heard his post-boy of the last relay slap one of the horses encouragingly before heading home to stable. The chaise wheels began to move on the cobbles.

"His Lordship himself will see you, sir. Of that I make no doubt," twittered the night-porter, fumbling with the bolt. "There was a terrible disturbance, back in July, when Captain Bettesworth arrived—not so late as this, to be sure, but towards midnight—and they waited till morning, to carry up the dispatches with his Lordship's chocolate. Thankful was I next day not to have been on duty at the time. . . . If you will follow me, sir——"

Lieutenant Lapenotière had turned instinctively towards a door on the right. It admitted to the Waiting Room, and there were few officers in the service who did not know—and only too well—that Chamber of Hope Deferred.

"No, sir, . . . this way, if you please," the night-porter corrected him, and opened a door on the left. "The Captains' Room," he announced, passing in and steering for the chimney-shelf, on which stood a pair of silver sconces each carrying three wax candles. These he took down, lit and replaced. "Ah, sir! Many's the time I've showed Lord Nelson himself into this room, in the days before Sir Horatio, and even after. And you were sayin'——"

"I said nothing."

The man moved to the door; but halted there and came back, as though in his own despite.

"I can't help it, sir. . . . Half a guinea he used to give me, regular. But the last time—and hard to believe 'twas little more than a month ago—he halts on his way out, and says he, searchin' awkward-like in his breeches' pocket with his left hand, 'Ned,' says he, 'my old friend'—aye, sir, his old friend he called me —'Ned,' says he, pullin' out a fistful o' gold, 'my old friend,' says he, 'I'll compound with you for two guineas, this bein' the last time you may hold the door open for me, in or out. But you must pick 'em out,' says he, spreadin' his blessed fingers with the gold in 'em: 'for a man can't count money who's lost his right flapper.' Those were his words, sir. 'Old friend,' he called me, in that way of his."

Lieutenant Lapenotière pointed to his left arm. Around the sleeve a black scarf was knotted.

"*Dead*, sir," the night-porter hushed his voice.

"Dead," echoed Lieutenant Lapenotière, staring at the Turkey carpet, of which the six candles, gaining strength, barely illumined the pattern. "Dead, at the top of victory; a great victory. Go: fetch somebody down."

The night-porter shuffled off. Lieutenant Lapenotière, erect and sombre, cast a look around the apartment, into which he had never before been admitted. The candles lit up a large painting—a queer bird's-eye view of Venice. Other pictures, dark and bituminous, decorated the panelled walls—portraits of dead admirals, a sea-piece or two, some charts. . . . This was all he discerned out in the dim light; and in fact he scanned the walls, the furniture of the room, inattentively. His stomach was fasting, his head light with rapid travel; above all, he had a sense of wonder that all this should be

happening to *him*. For, albeit a distinguished officer, he was a modest man, and by habit considered himself of no great importance; albeit a brave man, too, he shrank at the thought of the message he carried—a message to explode and shake millions of men in a confusion of wild joy or grief.

For about the tenth time in those sixteen days it seemed to burst and escape in an actual detonation, splitting his head—there, as he waited in the strange room where never a curtain stirred. . . . It was a trick his brain played him, repeating, echoing the awful explosion of the French seventy-four *Achille*, which had blown up towards the close of the battle. When the ship was ablaze and sinking, his own crew had put off in boats to rescue the Frenchmen, at close risk of their own lives, for her loaded guns, as they grew red-hot, went off at random among rescuers and rescued. . . .

As had happened before when he felt this queer shock, his mind travelled back and he seemed to hear the series of discharges running up at short intervals to the great catastrophe. . . . To divert his thoughts, he turned to study the view of Venice above the chimney-piece . . . and on a sudden faced about again.

He had a sensation that someone was in the room—someone standing close behind him.

But no. . . . For the briefest instant his eyes rested on an indistinct shadow—his own perhaps, cast by the candle-light? Yet why should it lie lengthwise there, shaped like a coffin, on the dark polished table that occupied the middle of the room?

The answer was that it did not. Before he could rub his eyes it had gone. Moreover, he had turned to recognise a living being . . . and no living person

was in the room, unless by chance (absurd supposition) one were hidden behind the dark red window curtains.

"Recognise" may seem a strange word to use; but here had lain the strangeness of the sensation—that the someone standing there was a friend, waiting to be greeted. It was with eagerness and a curious warmth of the heart that Lieutenant Lapenotière had faced about—upon nothing.

He continued to stare in a puzzled way at the window curtains, when a voice by the door said:

"Good evening!—or perhaps, to be correct, good morning! You are Mr.——"

"Lapenotière," answered the Lieutenant, who had turned sharply. The voice — a gentleman's and pleasantly modulated—was not one he knew; nor did he recognise the speaker—a youngish, shrewd-looking man, dressed in civilian black, with knee-breeches. "Lapenotière—of the *Pickle* schooner."

"Yes, yes—the porter bungled your name badly, but I guessed. Lord Barham will see you personally. He is, in fact, dressing with all haste at this moment. . . . I am his private secretary," explained the shrewd-looking gentleman in his quiet, business-like voice. "Will you come with me upstairs?"

Lieutenant Lapenotière followed him. At the foot of the great staircase the Secretary turned.

"I may take it, sir, that we are not lightly disturbing his Lordship—who is an old man."

"The news is of great moment, sir. Greater could scarcely be."

The Secretary bent his head. As they went up the staircase Lieutenant Lapenotière looked back and

caught sight of the night-porter in the middle of the hall, planted there and gazing up, following their ascent.

On the first-floor landing they were met by a truly ridiculous spectacle. There emerged from a doorway on the left of the wide corridor an old gentleman clad in night-cap, night-shirt and bedroom slippers, buttoning his breeches and cursing vigorously; while close upon him followed a valet with dressing-gown on one arm, waistcoat and wig on the other, vainly striving to keep pace with his master's impatience.

"The braces, my lord—your Lordship has them fore-part behind, if I may suggest——"

"Damn the braces!" swore the old gentleman. "Where is he? Hi, Tylney!" as he caught sight of the Secretary. "Where are we to go? My room, I suppose?"

"The fire is out there, my lord. . . . 'Tis past three in the morning. But after sending word to awake you, I hunted round and by good luck found a plenty of promising embers in the Board Room grate. On top of these I've piled what remained of my own fire, and Dobson has set a lamp there——"

"You've been devilish quick, Tylney. Dressed like a buck you are, too!"

"Your Lordship's wig," suggested the valet.

"Damn the wig!" Lord Barham snatched it and attempted to stick it on top of his night-cap, damned the night-cap, and, plucking it off, flung it to the man.

"I happened to be sitting up late, my lord, over the *Æolus* papers," said Mr. Secretary Tylney.

"Ha?" Then, to the valet, "The dressing-gown there! Don't fumble! . . . So this is Captain——"

"Lieutenant, sir: Lapenotière, commanding the *Pickle* schooner."

The Lieutenant saluted.

"From the Fleet, my lord—off Cadiz; or rather, off Cape Trafalgaro."

He drew the sealed dispatch from an inner breast-pocket and handed it to the First Lord.

"Here, step into the Board Room. . . . Where the devil are my spectacles?" he demanded of the valet, who had sprung forward to hold open the door.

Evidently the Board Room had been but a few hours ago the scene of a large dinner-party. Glasses, dessert-plates, dishes of fruit, decanters empty and half empty, cumbered the great mahogany table as dead and wounded, guns and tumbrils, might a battlefield. Chairs stood askew; crumpled napkins lay as they had been dropped or tossed, some on the floor, others across the table between the dishes.

"Looks cosy, eh?" commented the First Lord. "Maggs, set a screen around the fire, and look about for a decanter and some clean glasses."

He drew a chair close to the reviving fire, and glanced at the cover of the dispatch before breaking its seal.

"Nelson's handwriting?" he asked. It was plain that his old eyes, unaided by spectacles, saw the super-scription only as a blur.

"No, my lord: Admiral Collingwood's," said Lieuten-ant Lapenotière, inclining his head.

Old Lord Barham looked up sharply. His wig set awry, he made a ridiculous figure in his hastily donned garments. Yet he did not lack dignity.

"Why Collingwood?" he asked, his fingers breaking the seal. "God! you don't tell me——"

"Lord Nelson is dead, sir."

"Dead—dead? . . . Here, Tylney—you read what it says. Dead? . . . No, damme, let the captain tell his tale. Briefly, sir."

"Briefly, sir—Lord Nelson had word of Admiral Villeneuve coming out of the Straits, and engaged the combined fleets off Cape Trafalgaro. They were in single line, roughly; and he bore down in two columns, and cut off their van under Dumanoir. This was at dawn or thereabouts, and by five o'clock the enemy was destroyed."

"How many prizes?"

"I cannot say precisely, my lord. The word went, when I was signalled aboard the Vice-Admiral's flagship, that either fifteen or sixteen had struck. My own men were engaged, at the time, in rescuing the crew of a French seventy-four that had blown up; and I was too busy to count, had counting been possible. One or two of my officers maintain to me that our gains were higher. But the dispatch will tell, doubtless."

"Aye, to be sure. . . . Read, Tylney. Don't sit there clearing your throat, but read, man alive!" And yet it appeared that while the Secretary was willing enough to read, the First Lord had no capacity, as yet, to listen. Into the very first sentence he broke with—

"No, wait a minute. 'Dead,' d'ye say? . . . My God! . . . Lieutenant, pour yourself a glass of wine and tell us first how it happened."

Lieutenant Lapenotière could not tell very clearly. He had twice been summoned to board the *Royal Sovereign*—the first time to receive the command to hold himself ready. It was then that, coming alongside the great ship, he had read in all the officers' faces

an anxiety hard to reconcile with the evident tokens of victory around them. At once it had occurred to him that the Admiral had fallen, and he put the question to one of the lieutenants—to be told that Lord Nelson had indeed been mortally wounded and could not live long; but that he must be alive yet, and conscious, since the *Victory* was still signalling orders to the Fleet.

"I think, my lord," said he, "that Admiral Collingwood must have been doubtful, just then, what responsibility had fallen upon him, or how soon it might fall. He had sent for me to 'stand by' so to speak. He was good enough to tell me the news as it had reached him——"

Here Lieutenant Lapenotière, obeying the order to fill his glass, let spill some of the wine on the table. The sight of the dark trickle on the mahogany touched some nerve of the brain: he saw it widen into a pool of blood, from which, as they picked up a shattered seaman and bore him below, a lazy stream crept across the deck of the flag-ship towards the scuppers. He moved his feet, as he had moved them then, to be out of the way of it: but recovered himself in another moment and went on—

"He told me, my lord, that the *Victory* after passing under the *Bucentaure's* stern, and so raking her that she was put out of action, or almost, fell alongside the *Redoutable*. There was a long swell running, with next to no wind, and the two ships could hardly have cleared had they tried. At any rate, they hooked, and it was then a question which could hammer the harder. The Frenchman had filled his tops with sharp-shooters, and from one of these—the mizen-top, I believe—a musket-ball struck down the Admiral. He was walking at the

time to and fro on a sort of gangway he had caused to be planked over his cabin sky-light, between the wheel and the ladder-way. . . . Admiral Collingwood believed it had happened about half-past one . . ."

"Sit down, man, and drink your wine," commanded the First Lord as the dispatch-bearer swayed with a sudden faintness.

"It is nothing, my lord——"

But it must have been a real swoon, or something very like it: for he recovered to find himself lying in an arm-chair. He heard the Secretary's voice reading steadily on and on. . . . Also they must have given him wine, for he awoke to feel the warmth of it in his veins and coursing about his heart. But he was weak yet, and for the moment well content to lie still and listen.

Resting there and listening, he was aware of two sensations that alternated within him, chasing each other in and out of his consciousness. He felt all the while that he, John Richards Lapenotière, a junior officer in His Majesty's service, was assisting in one of the most momentous events in his country's history; and alone in the room with these two men, he felt it as he had never begun to feel it amid the smoke and roar of the actual battle. He had seen the dead hero but half a dozen times in his life: he had never been honoured by a word from him: but like every other naval officer, he had come to look up to Nelson as to the splendid particular star among commanders. *There* was greatness: *there* was that which lifted men to such deeds as write man's name across the firmament! And, strange to say, Lieutenant Lapenotière recognised something of it in this queer old man, in dressing-gown and ill-fitting wig, who took snuff and interrupted now with

a curse and anon with a "bravo!" as the Secretary read. He was absurd: but he was no common man, this Lord Barham. He had something of the ineffable aura of greatness.

But in the Lieutenant's brain, across this serious, even awful sense of the moment and of its meaning, there played a curious secondary sense that the moment was not—that what was happening before his eyes had either happened before or was happening in some vacuum in which past, present, future and the ordinary divisions of time had lost their bearings. The great twenty-four-hour clock at the end of the Board Room, ticking on and on while the Secretary read, wore an unfamiliar face. . . . Yes, time had gone wrong, somehow: and the events of the passage home to Falmouth, of the journey up to the doors of the Admiralty, though they ran on a chain, had no intervals to be measured by a clock, but followed one another like pictures on a wall. He saw the long, indigo-coloured swell thrusting the broken ships shoreward. He felt the wind freshening as it southered and he left the Fleet behind: he watched their many lanterns as they sank out of sight, then the glow of flares by the light of which dead-tired men were repairing damages, cutting away wreckage. His ship was wallowing heavily now, with the gale after her,—and now dawn was breaking clean and glorious on the swell off Lizard Point. A Mount's Bay lugger had spied them, and lying in wait, had sheered up close alongside, her crew bawling for news. He had not forbidden his men to call it back, and he could see the fellows' faces now, as it reached them from the speaking-trumpet: "Great victory—twenty taken or sunk—Admiral Nelson killed!" They had guessed something, noting the

Pickle's ensign at half-mast: yet as they took in the purport of the last three words, these honest fishermen had turned and stared at one another; and without one answering word, the lugger had been headed straight back to the mainland.

So it had been at Falmouth. A ship entering port has a thousand eyes upon her, and the *Pickle's* errand could not be hidden. The news seemed in some mysterious way to have spread even before he stepped ashore there on the Market Strand. A small crowd had collected, and, as he passed through it, many doffed their hats. There was no cheering at all—no, not for this the most glorious victory of the war—outshining even the Nile or Howe's First of June.

He had set his face as he walked to the inn. But the news had flown before him, and fresh crowds gathered to watch him off. The post-boys knew . . . and *they* told the post-boys at the next stage, and the next—Bodmin and Plymouth—not to mention the boatmen at Torpoint Ferry. But the country-side did not know: nor the labourers gathering in cider apples heaped under Devon apple-trees, nor, next day, the sportsmen banging off guns at the partridges around Salisbury. The slow, jolly life of England on either side of the high road turned leisurely as a wagon-wheel on its axle, while between hedgerows, past farm hamlets, church-towers and through the cobbled streets of market towns, he had sped and rattled with Collingwood's dispatch in his sealed case. The news had reached London with him. His last post-boys had carried it to their stables, and from stable to tavern. To-morrow—to-day, rather—in an hour or two—all the bells of London would be ringing—or tolling! . . .

"He's as tired as a dog," said the voice of the Secretary. "Seems almost a shame to waken him."

The Lieutenant opened his eyes and jumped to his feet with an apology. Lord Barham had gone, and the Secretary hard by was speaking to the night-porter, who bent over the fire, raking it with a poker. The hands of the Queen Anne clock indicated a quarter to six.

"The First Lord would like to talk with you . . . later in the day," said Mr. Tylney gravely, smiling a little these last words. He himself was white and haggard. "He suggested the early afternoon, say half-past two. That will give you time for a round sleep. . . . You might leave me the name of your hotel, in case he should wish to send for you before that hour."

"'The Swan with Two Necks,' Lad Lane, Cheapside," said Lieutenant Lapenotière.

He knew little of London, and gave the name of the hostelry at which, many years ago, he had alighted from a West Country coach with his box and midshipman's kit. . . . A moment later he found himself wondering if it still existed as a house of entertainment. Well, he must go and seek it.

The Secretary shook hands with him, smiling wanly.

"Few men, sir, have been privileged to carry such news as you have brought us to-night."

"And I went to sleep after delivering it," said Lieutenant Lapenotière, smiling back.

The night-porter escorted him to the hall, and opened the great door for him. In the portico he bade the honest man good night, and stood for a moment, mapping out in his mind his way to "The Swan with Two Necks." He shivered slightly, after his nap, in the chill of the approaching dawn.

As the door closed behind him he was aware of a light shining, out beyond the screen of the fore-court, and again a horse blew through its nostrils on the raw air.

"Lord!" thought the Lieutenant. "That fool of a post-boy cannot have mistaken me and waited all this time!"

He hurried out into Whitehall. Sure enough a chaise was drawn up there, and a post-boy stood by the near lamp, conning a scrap of paper by the light of it. No, it was a different chaise, and a different post-boy. He wore the buff and black, whereas the other had worn the blue and white. Yet he stepped forward confidently, and with something of a smile.

"Lieutenant Lapenotière?" he asked, reaching back and holding up his paper to the lamp to make sure of the syllables.

"That is my name," said the amazed Lieutenant.

"I was ordered here—five-forty-five—to drive you down to Merton."

"To Merton?" echoed Lieutenant Lapenotière, his hand going to his pocket. The post-boy's smile, or so much as could be seen of it by the edge of the lamp, grew more knowing.

"I ask no questions, sir."

"But—but who ordered you?"

The post-boy did not observe, or disregarded, his bewilderment.

"A Briton's a Briton, sir, I hope? I ask no questions, knowing my place. . . . But if so be as you were to tell me there's been a great victory——" He paused on this.

"Well, my man, you're right so far, and no harm in telling you."

"Aye," chirruped the post-boy. "When the maid called me up with the order, and said as how *he* and no other had called with it——"

"He?"

The fellow nodded.

"She knew him at once, from his portraits. Who wouldn't? With his right sleeve pinned across so. . . . And, said I, 'Then there's been a real victory. Never would you see him back, unless. And I was right, sir!' he concluded triumphantly.

"Let me see that piece of paper."

"You'll let me have it back, sir?—for a memento," the post-boy pleaded. Lieutenant Lapenotière took it from him—a plain half-sheet of note-paper roughly folded. On it was scribbled in pencil, back-handwise, "Lt. Lapenotière. Admiralty, Whitehall. At 6.30 a.m., not later. For Merton, Surrey."

He folded the paper very slowly, and handed it back to the post-boy.

"Very well, then. For Merton."

. . . . . .

The house lay but a very little distance beyond Wimbledon. Its blinds were drawn as Lieutenant Lapenotière alighted from the chaise and went up to the modest porch.

His hand was on the bell-pull. But some pressure checked him as he was on the point of ringing. He determined to wait for a while and turned away towards the garden.

The dawn had just broken; two or three birds were singing. It did not surprise—at any rate, it did not frighten—Lieutenant Lapenotière at all, when, turning

into a short pleached alley, he looked along it and saw *him* advancing.

—Yes, *him*, with the pinned sleeve, the noble, seamed, eager face. They met as friends. . . . In later years the lieutenant could never remember a word that passed, if any passed at all. He was inclined to think that they met and walked together in complete silence, for many minutes. Yet he ever maintained that they walked as two friends whose thoughts hold converse without need of words. He was not terrified at all. He ever insisted, on the contrary, that there, in the cold of the breaking day, his heart was light and warm as though flooded with first love—not troubled by it, as youth in first love is wont to be—but bathed in it; he, the ardent young officer, bathed in a glow of affection, ennobling, exalting him, making him free of a brotherhood he had never guessed.

He used also, in telling the story, to scandalise the clergyman of his parish by quoting the evangelists, and especially St. John's narrative of Mary Magdalen at the sepulchre.

For the door of the house opened at length; and a beautiful woman, scarred by knowledge of the world, came down the alley, slowly, unaware of him. Then (said he), as she approached, his hand went up to his pocket for the private letter he carried, and the shade at his side left him to face her in the daylight.

THE CASK ASHORE

(1807)

I

RUM FOR BOND

At the head of a diminutive creek of the Tamar River, a little above Saltash on the Cornish shore, stands the village of Botusfleming; and in early summer, when its cherry-orchards come into bloom, you will search far before finding a prettier.

The years have dealt gently with Botusfleming. As it is to-day, so—or nearly so—it was on a certain sunny afternoon in the year 1807, when the Reverend Edward Spettigew, Curate-in-Charge, sat in the garden before his cottage and smoked his pipe while he meditated a sermon. That is to say, he intended to meditate a sermon. But the afternoon was warm: the bees hummed drowsily among the wallflowers and tulips. From the bench his eyes followed the vale's descent between overlapping billows of cherry blossom to a gap wherein shone the silver Tamar—not, be it understood, the part called Hamoaze, where lay the warships and the hulks containing the French prisoners, but an upper reach seldom troubled by shipping.

Parson Spettigew laid the book face-downwards on his knee while his lips murmured a part of the text he had chosen: "*A place of broad rivers and streams*

. . . *wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby. . . .*" His pipe went out. The book slipped from his knee to the ground. He slumbered.

The garden gate rattled, and he awoke with a start. In the pathway below him stood a sailor; a middle-sized, middle-aged man, rigged out in best shore-going clothes—shiny tarpaulin hat, blue coat and waistcoat, shirt open at the throat, and white duck trousers with broad-buckled waistbelt.

"Beggin' your Reverence's pardon," began the visitor, touching the brim of his hat, and then upon second thoughts uncovering, "but my name's Jope—Ben Jope."

"Eh? . . . What can I do for you?" asked Parson Spettigew, a trifle flustered at being caught napping.

"—of the *Vesoovius* bomb, bo's'n," pursued Mr. Jope, with a smile that disarmed annoyance, so ingenuous it was, so friendly, and withal so respectful: "but paid off at eight this morning. Maybe your Reverence can tell me whereabouts to find an embalmer in these parts?"

"A—a *what*?"

"Embalmer." Mr. Jope chewed thoughtfully for a moment or two upon a quid of tobacco. "Sort of party you'd go to supposin' as you had a corpse by you and wanted to keep it for a permanency. You take a lot of gums and spices, and first of all you lays out the deceased, and next——"

"Yes, yes," the Parson interrupted hurriedly; "I know the process, of course."

"What? to *practise* it?" Hope illumined Mr. Jope's countenance.

"No, most certainly not. . . . But, my good man, —an embalmer! and at Botusfleming, of all places!"

The sailor's face fell. He sighed patiently.

"That's what they said at Saltash, more or less. I got a sister living there—Sarah Treleaven her name is —a widow-woman, and sells fish. When I called on her this morning, 'Embalmer?' she said; 'Go and embalm your grandmother!' Those were her words, and the rest of Saltash wasn't scarcely more helpful. But, as luck would have it, while I was searchin', Bill Adams went for a shave, and inside of the barber's shop what should he see but a fair-sized otter in a glass case? Bill began to admire it, and it turned out the barber had stuffed the thing. Maybe your Reverence knows the man?—'A. Grigg and Son,' he calls hisself."

"Grigg? Yes, to be sure: he stuffed a trout for me last summer."

"What weight, makin' so bold?"

"Seven pounds."

Mr. Jope's face fell again.

"Well-a-well! I dare say the size don't matter, once you've got the knack. We've brought him along, anyway; and, what's more, we've made him bring all his tools. By his talk, he reckons it to be a shavin' job, and we agreed to wait before we undeceived him."

"But—you'll excuse me—I don't quite follow——"

Mr. Jope pressed a forefinger mysteriously to his lip, then jerked a thumb in the direction of the river.

"If your Reverence wouldn' mind steppin' down to the creek with me?" he suggested respectfully.

Parson Spettigew fetched his hat, and together the pair descended the vale beneath the dropping petals of the cherry. At the foot of it they came to a creek,

which the tide at this hour had flooded and almost overbrimmed. Hard by the water's edge, backed by tall elms, stood a dilapidated fish-store, and below it lay a boat with nose aground on a beach of flat stones. Two men were in the boat. The barber—a slip of a fellow in rusty top-hat and suit of rusty black—sat in the stern-sheets face to face with a large cask; a cask so ample that, to find room for his knees, he was forced to crook them at a high, uncomfortable angle. In the bows, boathook in hand, stood a tall sailor, arrayed in shore-going clothes similar to Mr. Jope's. His face was long, sallow, and expressive of taciturnity, and he wore a beard—not, however, where beards are usually worn, but as a fringe beneath his clean-shaven chin.

"Well, here we are!" announced Mr. Jope cheerfully. "Your Reverence knows A. Grigg and Son, and the others you can trust in all weathers; bein' William Adams, otherwise Bill, and Eli Tonkin—friends o' mine an' shipmates both."

The tall seaman touched his hat by way of acknowledging the introduction.

"But—but I only see *one*!" protested Parson Spettigew.

"This here's Bill Adams," said Mr. Jope, and again the tall seaman touched his hat. "Is it Eli you're missin'? He's in the cask."

"Oh!"

"We'll hoick him up to the store, Bill, if you're ready? It looks a nice cool place. And while you're prizin' him open, I'd best explain to his Reverence and the barber. Here, unship the shore-plank; and you, A. Grigg and Son, lend a hand to heave. . . . Aye, you're right: it weighs more'n a trifle—bein' a quarter-

puncheon, an' the best proof-spirits. Tilt her *this* way. . . . Ready? . . . then w'y-ho! and away she goes!"

With a heave and a lurch that canted the boat until the water poured over her gunwale, the huge tub was rolled overside into shallow water. The recoil, as the boat righted herself, cast the small barber off his balance, and he fell back over a thwart with heels in air. But before he picked himself up, the two seamen, encouraging one another with strange cries, had leapt out and were trundling the cask up the beach, using the flats of their hands. With another *w'y-ho!* and a tremendous lift, they ran it up to the turfy plat, whence Bill Adams steered it with ease through the ruinated doorway of the store. Mr. Jope returned, smiling and mopping his brow.

"It's this-a-way," he said, addressing the Parson. "Eli Tonkin his name is, or was; and, as he said, of this parish."

"Tonkin?" queried the Parson. "There are no Tonkins surviving in Botusfleming parish. The last of them was a poor old widow I laid to rest the week after Christmas."

"Belay there! . . . Dead, is she?" Mr. Jope's face exhibited the liveliest disappointment. "And after the surprise we'd planned for her!" he murmured ruefully. "Hi! Bill!" he called to his shipmate, who having stored the cask, was returning to the boat.

"Wot is it?" asked Bill Adams inattentively. "Look here, where did we stow the hammer an' chisel?"

"Take your head out o' the boat an' listen. The old woman's dead!"

The tall man absorbed the news slowly.

"That's a facer," he said at length. "But maybe we can fix *her* up, too? I'll stand my share."

"She was buried the week after Christmas."

"Oh?" Bill scratched his head. "Then we can't—not very well."

"Times an' again I've heard Eli talk of his poor old mother," said Mr. Jope, turning to the Parson. "Which you'll hardly believe it, but though I knowed him for a West Country man, 'twas not till the last I larned what parish he hailed from. It happened very curiously. Bill, rout up A. Grigg and Son, an' fetch him forra'd here to listen. You'll find the tools underneath him in the stern-sheets."

Bill obeyed, and possessing himself of hammer and chisel lounged off to the shore. The little barber drew near, and stood at Mr. Jope's elbow. His face wore an unhealthy pallor, and he smelt potently of strong drink.

"Brandy it is," apologised Mr. Jope, observing a slight contraction of the Parson's nostril. "I reckoned 'twould tauten him a bit for what's ahead. . . . Well, as I was sayin', it happened very curiously. This day fortnight we were beatin' up an' across the Bay o' Biscay, after a four months' to-an'-fro game in front of Toolon Harbour. Blowin' fresh it was, an' we makin' pretty poor weather of it—the *Vesoovius* bein' a powerful wet tub, an' a slug at the best o' times. 'Tisn' her fault, you understand: aboard a bombship everything's got to be heavy—timbers, scantling, everything about her—to stand the concussion. What with this an' her mortars, she sits pretty low; but to make up for it, what with all this dead weight, and bein' short-sparred, she can carry all sail in a breeze that would surprise you. Well, sir, for two days she'd been carryin'

canvas that fairly smothered us, an' Cap'n Crang not a man to care how we fared forra'd, so long as the water didn' reach aft to his own quarters. But at last the First Lootenant, Mr. Wapshott, took pity on us, and —the Cap'n bein' below, takin' his nap after dinner— sends the crew o' the maintop aloft to take a reef in the tops'le. Poor Eli was one. Whereby the men had scarcely reached the top afore Cap'n Crang comes up from his cabin an' along the deck, not troublin' to cast an eye aloft. Whereby he missed what was happenin'. Whereby he had just come abreast of the mainmast, when — sock at his very feet — there drops a man. 'Twas Eli, that had missed his hold, an' dropped somewhere on the back of his skull. 'Hallo!' says the Cap'n, 'an' where the devil might *you* come from?' Eli heard it, poor fellow—an' says he, as I lifted him, 'If you please, sir, from Botusfleming, three miles t'other side of Saltash.' 'Then you've had a damn quick passage,' answers Cap'n Crang, an' turns on his heel.

"Well, sir, we all agreed the Cap'n might ha' showed more feelin', specially as poor Eli'd broke the base of his skull, an' by eight bells handed in the number of his mess. Five or six of us talked it over, agreein' as how 'twas hardly human, an' Eli such a good fellow, too, let alone bein' a decent seaman. Whereby the notion came to me that, as he'd come from Botusfleming— those bein' his last words—back to Botusfleming he should go, an' on that we cooked up a plan. Bill Adams being on duty in the sick-bay, there wasn' no difficulty in sewin' up a dummy in Eli's place; an' the dummy, sir, nex' day we dooly committed to the deep, Cap'n Crang hisself readin' the service. The real question

was, what to do with Eli? Whereby, the purser and me bein' friends, I goes to him an' says, 'Look here,' I says, 'we'll be paid off in ten days or so, an' there's a trifle o' prize-money, too. 'What price'll you sell us a cask o' the ship's rum—say a quarter-puncheon for choice?' 'What for?' says he. 'For shore-going purposes,' says I. 'Bill Adams an' me got a use for it.' 'Well,' says the purser—a decent chap, an' by name Wilkins—'I'm an honest man,' says he, 'an' to oblige a friend you shall have it at store-valuation rate. An' what's more,' said he, 'I got the wind o' your little game, an'll do what I can to help it along; for I al'ays liked the deceased, an' in my opinion Captain Crang behaved most unfeelin'. You tell Bill to bring the body to me, an' there'll be no more trouble about it till I hand you over the cask at Plymouth.' Well, sir, the man was as good as his word. We smuggled the cask ashore last evenin', an' hid it in the woods this side o' Mount Edgcumbe. This mornin' we reshipped it as you see. First along we intended no more than just to break the news to Eli's mother, an' hand him over to her; but Bill reckoned that to hand him over, cask an' all, would look careless; for (as he said) 'twasn' as if you could *bury* 'im in a cask. We allowed your Reverence would draw the line at that, though we hadn' the pleasure o' knowin' you at the time."

"Yes," agreed the Parson, as Mr. Jope paused, "I fear it could not be done without scandal."

"That's just how Bill put it. 'Well then,' says I, thinkin' it over, 'why not do the handsome while we're about it? You an' me ain't the sort of men,' I says, 'to spoil the ship for a ha'porth o' tar.' 'Certainly we ain't,' says Bill. 'An' we've done a lot for Eli,' says

I. 'We have,' says Bill. 'Well then,' says I, 'let's put a coat o' paint on the whole business an' have him embalmed.' Bill was enchanted."

"I—I beg your pardon," put in the barber, edging away a pace.

"Bill was enchanted. Hark to him in the store, there, knockin' away at the chisel."

"But there's some misunderstanding," the little man protested earnestly. "I understood it was to be a *shave*."

"You can shave him, too, if you like."

"If I th—thought you were s—serious——"

"Have some more brandy." Mr. Jope pulled out and proffered a flask. "Only don't overdo it, or it'll make your hand shaky. . . . Serious? You may lay to it that Bill's serious. He's that set on the idea, it don't make no difference to him, as you may have noticed, Eli's mother not bein' alive to take pleasure in it. Why, he wanted to embalm *her*, too! He's doin' this now for his own gratification, is Bill, an' you may take it from me when Bill sets his heart on a thing he sees it through. Don't you cross him, that's my advice."

"But—but——"

"No, you don't." As the little man made a wild spring to flee up the beach, Mr. Jope shot out a hand and gripped him by the coat collar. "Now look here," he said very quietly, as the poor wretch would have grovelled at the Parson's feet, "you was boastin' to Bill, not an hour agone, as you could stuff *anything*."

"Don't hurt him," Parson Spettigew interposed, touching Mr. Jope's arm.

"I'm not hurtin' him, your Reverence, only—— Eh? What's that?"

All turned their faces towards the store.

"Your friend is calling to you," said the Parson.

"Bad language, too . . . that's not like Bill, as a rule. Ahoy there, Bill!"

"Ahoy!" answered the voice of Mr. Adams.

"What's up?" Without waiting for an answer Mr. Jope ran the barber before him up the beach to the doorway, the Parson following. "What's up?" he demanded again, as he drew breath.

"Take an' see for yourself," answered Mr. Adams darkly, pointing with his chisel.

A fine fragrance of rum permeated the store.

Mr. Jope advanced, and peered into the staved cask.

"Gone?" he exclaimed, and gazed around blankly.

Bill Adams nodded.

"But *where*? . . . You don't say he's *dissolved*?"

"It ain't the usual way o' rum. An' it *is* rum?"

Bill appealed to the Parson.

"By the smell, undoubtedly."

"I tell you what's happened. That fool of a Wilkins has made a mistake in the cask. . . ."

"An' Eli?—oh, Lord!" gasped Mr. Jope.

"They'll have returned Eli to the Victuallin' Yard before this," said Bill gloomily. "I overheard Wilkins sayin' as he was to pass over all stores an' accounts at nine-thirty this mornin'."

"An', once there, who knows where he's got mixed? . . . He'll go the round o' the Fleet, maybe. Oh, my word, an' the ship that broaches him!"

Bill Adams opened and shut his mouth quickly, like a fish ashore.

"They'll reckon they've got a lucky-bag," he said weakly.

"An' Wilkins paid off with the rest, an' no address, even if he could help—which I doubt."

"Eh? I got a note from Wilkins, as it happens." Bill Adams took off his tarpaulin hat, and extracted a paper from the lining of the crown. "He passed it down to me this mornin' as I pushed off from the ship. Said I was to keep it, an' maybe I'd find it useful. I wondered what he meant at the time, me takin' no particular truck with pursers ashore. . . . It crossed my mind as I'd heard he meant to get married, and maybe he wanted me to stand best man at the weddin'. W'ich I didn' open the note at the time; not likin' to refuse him, after he'd behaved so well to me."

"Pass it over," commanded Mr. Jope. He took the paper and unfolded it, but either the light was dim within the store, or the handwriting hard to decipher. "Would your Reverence read it out for us?"

Parson Spettigew carried the paper to the doorway. He read its contents aloud, and slowly:

To Mr. Bill Adams,

Capt. of the Fore-top, H.M.S. *Vesuvius*.

Sir,—It was a dummy Capt. Crang buried. We cast the late E. Tonkin overboard the second night in lat. 46/30, long. 7/15, or thereabouts. By which time the feeling aboard had cooled down and it seemed a waste of good spirit. The rum you paid for is good rum. Hoping that you and Mr. Jope will find a use for it,

Your obedient servant,

S. Wilkins.

There was a long pause, through which Mr. Adams could be heard breathing hard.

"But what are we to do with it?" asked Mr. Jope, scratching his head in perplexity.

"Drink it. Wot else?"

"But where?"

"Oh," said Mr. Adams, "anywhere!"

"That's all very well," replied his friend. "You never had no property, an' don't know its burdens. We'll have to hire a house for this, an' live there till it's finished."

II

THE MULTIPLYING CELLAR

St. Dilp by Tamar has altered little in a hundred years. As it stands to-day, embowered in cherry-trees, so (or nearly so) it stood on that warm afternoon in the early summer of 1807, when two weather-tanned seamen of His Majesty's Fleet came along its fore street with a hand-barrow and a huge cask very cunningly lashed thereto. On their way they eyed the cottages and gardens to right and left with a lively curiosity; but "Lord, Bill," said the shorter seaman, misquoting Wordsworth unawares, "the werry houses look asleep!"

At the "Punch-Bowl" Inn, kept by J. Coyne, they halted by silent consent. Mr. William Adams, who had been trundling the barrow, set it down, and Mr. Benjamin Jope—whose good-natured face would have recommended him anywhere—walked into the drinking-parlour and rapped on the table. This brought to him the innkeeper's daughter, Miss Elizabeth, twenty years old and comely. "What can I do for you, sir?" she asked.

"Two pots o' beer, first-along," said Mr. Jope.

"Two?"

"I got a shipmate outside."

Miss Elizabeth fetched the two pots.

"Here, Bill!" he called, carrying one to the door. Returning, he blew at the froth on his own pot meditatively. "And the next thing is, I want a house."

"A house?"

"'Stonishing echo you keep here. . . . Yes, miss, a house. My name's Jope—Ben Jope—o' the *Vesuvius* bomb, bo's'un; but paid off at eight this morning. My friend outside goes by the name of Bill Adams; an' you'll find him livelier than he looks. Everyone does. But I forgot; you ha'n't seen him yet, and he can't come in, havin' to look after the cask."

"The ca—" Miss Elizabeth had almost repeated the word, but managed to check herself.

"You ought to consult someone about it, at your age," said Mr. Jope solicitously. "Yes, the cask. Rum it is, an' a quarter-puncheon. Bill and me clubbed an' bought it off the purser las' night, the chaplain havin' advised us not to waste good prize-money ashore but invest it in something we really wanted. But I don't know if you've ever noticed how often one thing leads to another. You can't go drinkin' out a quarter-puncheon o' rum in the high road, not very well. So the next thing is, we want a house."

"But," said the girl, "who ever heard of a house to let hereabouts!"

Mr. Jope's face fell.

"Ain't there none? An' it seemed so retired, too, an' handy near Plymouth."

"There's not a house to let in St. Dilp parish, unless it be the Rectory."

Mr. Jope's face brightened.

"Then we'll take the Rectory," he said. "Where is it?"

"Down by the river. . . . But 'tis nonsense you're tellin'. The Rectory indeed! Why, it's a seat!"

Mr. Jope's face clouded.

"Oh," he said, "is that all?"

"It's a fine one, too."

"It'd have to be, to accomydate Bill an' me an' the cask. I wanted a house, as I thought I told ye."

"Oh, but I meant a country-seat," explained Miss Elizabeth. "The Rectory is a house."

Again Mr. Jope's face brightened.

"An' so big," she went on, "that the Rector can't afford to live in it. That's why 'tis to let. The rent's forty pound."

"Can I see him?"

"No, you can't; for he lives up to Lunnon an' hires Parson Spettigew of Botusfleming to do the work. But it's my father has the lettin' o' the Rectory if a tenant comes along. He keeps the keys."

"Then I'd like to talk with your father."

"No you wouldn't," said the girl frankly; "because he's asleep. Father drinks a quart o' cider at three o'clock every day of his life, an' no one don't dare disturb him before six."

"Well, I like reggilar habits," said Mr. Jope, diving a hand into his breeches' pocket and drawing forth a fistful of golden guineas. "But couldn't you risk it?"

Miss Elizabeth's eyes wavered.

"No, I couldn'," she sighed, shaking her head.

"Father's very violent in his temper. But I tell you what," she added: "I might fetch the keys, and you might go an' see the place for yourself."

"Capital," said Mr. Jope. While she was fetching these he finished his beer. Then, having insisted on paying down a guinea for earnest-money, he took the keys and her directions for finding the house. She repeated them in the porch for the benefit of the taller seaman; who, as soon as she had concluded, gripped the handles of his barrow afresh and set off without a word. She gazed after the pair as they passed down the street.

At the foot of it a by-lane branched off towards the creek-side. It led them past a churchyard and a tiny church almost smothered in cherry-trees—for the churchyard was half an orchard: past a tumbling stream, a mill and some wood-stacks; and so, still winding downwards, brought them to a pair of iron gates, rusty and weather-greened. The gates stood unlocked; and our two seamen found themselves next in a carriage-drive along which it was plain no carriage had passed for a very long while. It was overgrown with weeds, and straggling laurels encroached upon it on either hand; and as it rounded one of these laurels Mr. Jope caught his breath sharply.

"Lor' lumme!" he exclaimed. "It is a seat, as the gel said!"

Mr. Adams, following close with the wheelbarrow, set it down, stared, and said:

"Then she's a liar. It's a house."

"It's twice the size of a three-decker, anyway," said his friend, and together they stood and contemplated the building.

It was a handsome pile of old brickwork, set in a foundation of rock almost overhanging the river—on which, however, it turned its back; in design, an oblong of two storeys, with a square tower at each of the four corners, and the towers connected by a parapet of free-stone. The windows along the front were regular, and those on the ground-floor less handsome than those of the upper floor, where (it appeared) were the state-rooms. For—strangest feature of all—the main entrance was in this upper storey, with a dozen broad steps leading down to the unkempt carriage-way and a lawn, across which a magnificent turkey oak threw dark masses of shadow.

But the house was a picture of decay. Unpainted shutters blocked the windows; tall grasses sprouted in the crevices of the entrance steps and parapet; dislodged slates littered the drive; smears of old rains ran down the main roof and from a lantern of which the louvers were all in ruin, some hanging by a nail, others blown on edge by long-past gales. The very nails had rusted out of the walls, and the creepers they should have supported hung down in ropy curtains.

Mr. Adams scratched his head.

"What I'd like to know," said he after a while, "is how to get the cask up them steps."

"There'll be a cellar-door for sartin," Mr. Jope assured him cheerfully. "You don't suppose the gentry takes their beer in at the front, hey?"

"This," said Mr. Adams, "is rum; which is a totally different thing." But he set down his barrow, albeit reluctantly, and followed his shipmate up the entrance steps. The front door was massive, and sheeted over with lead embossed in foliate and heraldic patterns.

Mr. Jope inserted the key, turned it with some difficulty, and pushed the door wide. It opened immediately upon the great hall, and after a glance within he removed his hat.

The hall, some fifty feet long, ran right across the waist of the house, and was lit by tall windows at either end. Its floor was of black and white marble in lozenge pattern. Three immense chandeliers depended from its roof. Along each of the two unpierced walls, against panels of peeling stucco, stood a line of statuary—heathen goddesses, fauns, athletes and gladiators, with here and there a vase or urn copied from the antique. The furniture consisted of half a dozen chairs, a settee, and an octagon table, all carved out of wood in pseudo-classical patterns, and painted with a grey wash to resemble stone.

"It's a fine room," said Mr. Jope, walking up to a statue of Diana: "but a man couldn' hardly invite a mixed company to dinner here."

"Symonds's f'r instance," suggested Mr. Adams. Symonds's being a somewhat notorious boarding-house in a street of Plymouth which shall be nameless.

"You ought to be ashamed o' yourself, Bill," said Mr. Jope sternly.

"They're anticks, that's what they are."

Mr. Adams drew a long breath.

"I shouldn' wonder," he said.

"Turnin' 'em wi' their faces to the wall 'd look too marked," mused Mr. Jope. "But a few tex o' Scripture along the walls might ease things down a bit."

"Wot about the hold?" Mr. Adams suggested.

"The cellar, you mean. Let's have a look."

They passed through the hall; thence down a stone

stairway into an ample vaulted kitchen, and thence along a slate-flagged corridor flanked by sculleries, larders and other kitchen offices. The two seamen searched the floors of all in hope of finding a cellar trap or hatchway, and Mr. Adams was still searching when Mr. Jope called to him from the end of the corridor:

"Here we are!"

He had found a flight of steps worthy of a cathedral crypt, leading down to a stone archway. The archway was closed by an iron-studded door.

"It's like goin' to church," commented Mr. Jope, bating his voice. "Where's the candles, Bill?"

"In the barrer 'long wi' the bread an' bacon."

"Then step back and fetch 'em."

But from the foot of the stairs Mr. Jope presently called up that this was unnecessary, for the door had opened to his hand—smoothly, too, and without noise; but he failed to note this as strange, being taken aback for the moment by a strong draught of air that met him, blowing full in his face.

"There's daylight here, too, of a sort," he reported: and so there was. It pierced the darkness in a long shaft, slanting across from a doorway of which the upper panel stood open to the sky.

"Funny way o' leavin' a house," he muttered, as he stepped across the bare cellar floor and peered forth. "Why, hallo, here's water!"

The cellar, in fact, stood close by the river's edge, with a broad postern-sill actually overhanging the tide, and a flight of steps, scarcely less broad, curving up and around the south-west angle of the house.

While Mr. Jope studied these and the tranquil river

flowing, all grey and twilit, at his feet, Mr. Adams had joined him and had also taken bearings.

"With a check-rope," said Mr. Adams, "—and I got one in the barrer—we can lower it down here easy."

He pointed to the steps.

"Hey?" said Mr. Jope. "Yes, the cask—to be sure."

"Wot else?" said Mr. Adams. "An' I reckon we'd best get to work, if we're to get it housed afore dark."

They did so: but by the time they had the cask bestowed and trigged up, and had spiled it and inserted a tap, darkness had fallen. If they wished to explore the house farther, it would be necessary to carry candles; and somehow neither Mr. Jope nor Mr. Adams felt eager for this adventure. They were hungry, moreover. So they decided to make their way back to the great hall, and sup.

They supped by the light of a couple of candles. The repast consisted of bread and cold bacon washed down by cold rum-and-water. At Symonds's—they gave no utterance to this reflection, but each knew it to be in the other's mind—at Symonds's just now there would be a boiled leg of mutton with turnips, and the rum would be hot, with a slice of lemon.

"We shall get accustomed," said Mr. Jope with a forced air of cheerfulness.

Mr. Adams glanced over his shoulder at the statuary and answered "yes" in a loud unfaltering voice. After a short silence he arose, opened one of the windows, removed a quid from his cheek, laid it carefully on the outer sill, closed the window, and resumed his seat. Mr. Jope had pulled out a cake of tobacco, and was slicing it into small pieces with his clasp-knife.

"Goin' to smoke?" asked Mr. Adams, with another glance at the Diana.

"It don't hurt this 'ere marble pavement—not like the other thing."

"No"—Mr. Adams contemplated the pavement while he, too, drew forth and filled a pipe—"a man might play a game of checkers on it; that is, o' course, when no one was lookin'."

"I been thinking," announced Mr. Jope, "over what his Reverence said about bankin' our money."

"How much d'ye reckon we've got?"

"Between us? Hundred an' twelve pound, fourteen and six. That's after paying for rum, barrer and oddments. We could live," said Mr. Jope, removing his pipe from his mouth and pointing the stem at his friend in expository fashion—"we could live in this here house for more'n three years."

"Oh!" said Mr. Adams, but without enthusiasm. "Could we now?"

"That is, if we left out the vittles."

"But we're not goin' to."

"O' course not. Vittles for two'll run away with a heap of it. And then there'll be callers."

"Callers?" Mr. Adams's face brightened.

"Not the sort you mean. Country folk. It's the usual thing when strangers come an' settle in a place o' this size. . . . But, all the same, a hundred an' twelve pound, fourteen and six is a heap: an' as I say, we got to think over bankin' it. A man feels solid settin' here with money under his belt; an' yet between you an' me I wouldn't mind if it was less so, in a manner o' speakin'."

"Me, either."

"I was wonderin' what it would feel like to wake in the night an' tell yourself that someone was rollin' up money for you like a snowball."

"There might be a certain amount of friskiness in that. But contrariwise, if you waked an' told yourself the fella was runnin' off with it, there wuldn'."

"Shore-living folks takes that risk an' grows accustomed to it. W'y look at the fellow in charge o' this house."

"Where?" asked Mr. Adams nervously.

"The landlord-fellow, I mean, up in the village. His daughter said he went to sleep every afternoon, an' wouldn' be waked. How could a man afford to do that if his money wasn' rollin' up somewhere for him? An' the place fairly lined with barrels o' good liquor."

"Mightn't liquor accumylate in the same way?" asked Mr. Adams, with sudden and lively interest.

"No, you nincom'," began Mr. Jope—when a loud knocking on the outer door interrupted him. "Hallo!" he sank his voice. "Callers already!"

He went to the door, unlocked and opened it. A heavy-shouldered, bull-necked man stood outside in the dusk.

"Good evenin'."

"Evenin'," said the stranger. "My name is Coyne an' you must get out o' this."

"I don't see as it follows," answered Mr. Jope meditatively. "But hadn't you better step inside?"

"I don't want to bandy words——" began the publican, entering as though he shouldered his way.

"That's right! Bill, fetch an' fill a glass for the gentleman."

"No, thank you. . . . Well, since you have it

handy. But look here: I got nothin' particular to say against you two men, only you can't stop here to-night. That's straight enough, I hope, and no bones broken."

"Straight it is," Mr. Jope agreed: "and we'll talk o' the bones by an' by. Wot name, sir?—makin' so bold."

"My name's Coyne."

"An' mine's Cash." Mr. Jope fumbled with the fastening of a pouch underneath his broad waistbelt. "So we're well met. How much?"

"Eh?"

"How much? Accordin' to your darter 'twas forty pound a year, an' money down: but whether monthly or quarterly she didn' say."

"It's no question of money. It's a question of you two clearin' out, and at once. I'm breakin' what I have to say as gently as I can. If you don't choose to understand plain language, I must go an' fetch the constable."

"I seen him, up at the village this afternoon, an' you'd better not. Bill, why can't ye fill the gentleman's glass?"

"Because the jug's empty," answered Mr. Adams.

"Then slip down to the cellar again."

"No!" Mr. Coyne almost screamed it, rising from his chair. Dropping back weakly, he murmured, panting, "Not for me: not on any account!" His face was pale, and for the moment all the aggressiveness had gone out of him. He lifted a hand weakly to his heart.

"A sudden faintness," he groaned, closing his eyes. "If you two men had any feelin's, you'd offer to see me home."

"The pair of us?" asked Mr. Jope suavely.

"I scale over seventeen stone," murmured Mr. Coyne, still with his eyes closed; "an' a weight like that is no joke."

Mr. Jope nodded.

"You're right there; so you'd best give it over. Sorry to seem heartless, sir, but 'tis for your good: an' to walk home in your state would be a sin, when we can fix you up a bed in the house."

Mr. Coyne opened his eyes, and they were twinkling vindictively.

"Sleep in this house?" he exclaimed. "I wouldn't do it, not for a thousand pound!"

"W'y not?"

"You'll find out 'why not,' safe enough, afore the mornin'! Why 'twas in kindness—pure kindness—I asked the pair of ye to see me home. I wouldn't be one to stay in this house alone arter nightfall—no, or I wouldn't be one to leave a dog alone here, let be a friend. My daughter didn't tell, I reckon, as this place was ha'nted?"

"Ha'nted?"

"Aye. By females too."

"O—oh!" Mr. Adams, who had caught his breath, let it escape in a long sigh of relief. "Like Symonds's," he murmured.

"Not a bit like Symonds's," his friend corrected snappishly. "He's talkin' o' dead uns—ghosts—that is, if I take your meanin', sir?"

Mr. Coyne nodded.

"That's it. Ghosts."

"Get out with you!" said Mr. Adams, incredulous.

"You must be a pair of very simple men," said landlord Coyne, half-closing his eyes again, "if you reckoned

that forty pound would rent a place like this without some drawbacks. Well, the drawbacks is ghosts. Four of 'em, and all females."

"Tell us about 'em, sir," requested Mr. Jope, dropping into his seat. "An' if Bill don't care to listen, he can fill up his time by takin' the jug an' steppin' down to the cellar."

"Damned if I do," said Mr. Adams, stealing a glance over his shoulder at the statues.

"It's a distressin' story," began Mr. Coyne with a very slight flutter of the eyelids. "Maybe my daughter told you—an' if she didn't, you may have found out for yourselves—as how this here house is properly speakin' four houses—nothing in common but the roof, an' the cellar, an' this room we're sittin' in. . . . Well, then, back along there lived an old Rector here, with a man-servant called Oliver. One day he rode up to Exeter, spent a week there, an' brought home a wife. Footman Oliver was ready at the door to receive 'em, an' the pair went upstairs to a fine set o' rooms he'd made ready in the sou'-west tower, an' there for a whole month they lived together, as you might say, in wedded happiness.

"At th' end o' the month th' old Rector discovered he had business takin' him to Bristol. He said his farewells very lovin'ly, promised to come back as soon as he could, but warned the poor lady against setting foot outside the doors. The gardens an' fields (he said) swarmed with field-mice, an' he knew she had a terror of mice of all sorts. So off he rode, an' by an' by came back by night with a second young lady: and Oliver showed 'em up to the nor'-east tower for the honeymoon.

"A week later my gentleman had a call to post down to Penzance. He warned his second wife that it was a terrible year for adders an' the ground swarmin' with 'em, for he knew she had a horror o' snakes. Inside of a fortnight he brought home a third——"

"Bill," said Mr. Jope, sitting up sharply, "what noise was that?"

"I didn't hear it," answered Mr. Adams, who was turning up his trousers uneasily. "Adders, maybe."

"Seemed to me it sounded from somewheres in the cellar. Maybe you wouldn't mind steppin' down, seein' as you don't take no interest in what Mr. Coyne's tellin'."

"I'm beginning to."

"The cellar's the worst place of all," said Mr. Coyne, blinking. "It's there that the bodies were found."

"Bodies?"

"Bodies. Four of 'em. I was goin' to tell you how he brought home another, havin' kept the third poor lady to her rooms with some tale about a mad dog starvin' to death in his shrubberies—he didn't know where——"

"If you don't mind," Mr. Jope interposed, "I've a notion to hear the rest o' the story some other evenin'. It's—it's agreeable enough to bear spinnin' out, an' I understand you're a fixture in this neighbourhood."

"Certainly," said Mr. Coyne, rising. "But wot about *you*?"

"I'll tell you to-morrow."

Mr. Jope gripped the arms of his chair, having uttered the bravest speech of his life. He sat for a while, the

sound of his own voice echoing strangely in his ears, even when Mr. Coyne rose to take his leave.

"Well, I can't help admirin' you," said Mr. Coyne handsomely. "By the way the rent's by the quarter, an' in advance—fours into forty is ten; I mention it as a matter of business, and in case we don't meet again."

Mr. Jope counted out the money.

When Mr. Coyne had taken his departure the pair sat a long while in silence, their solitary candle flickering on the table between them.

"You spoke out very bold," said Mr. Adams at length.

"Did I?" said Mr. Jope. "I didn't feel it."

"What cuts me to the quick is the thought o' them adders outside."

"Ye dolt! There ain't no real adders outside. They're what the chap invented to frighten the women."

"Sure? Then," mused Mr. Adams, after a pause, "maybe there ain't no real ghosts neither, but he invented the whole thing."

"Maybe. What d'ye say to steppin' down an' fetchin' up another mugful o' liquor?"

"I say," answered Mr. Adams slowly, "as how I won't."

"Toss for it," suggested Mr. Jope. "You refuse? Very well, then, I must go. Only I thought better of ye, Bill—I did indeed."

"I can't help what ye thought," Mr. Adams began sulkily; and then, as his friend rose with the face of a man who goes to meet the worst, he sprang up quaking. "Lord's sake, Ben Jope! You ain't a-goin' to take the candle an' leave me!"

"Bill Adams," said Mr. Jope with fine solemnity, "if I was to put a name on your besettin' sin, it would be cowardice—an' you can just sit here in the dark an' think it over."

"When I was on the p'int of offering to go with ye!"

"Ho! Was you? Very well, then, I accept the offer, an' you can walk first."

"But I don't see——"

"Another word," announced Mr. Jope firmly, "an' you won't! *For I'll blow out the candle.*"

Mr. Adams surrendered, and tottered to the door. They passed out, and through the vaulted kitchen, and along the slate-flagged corridor — very slowly here, for a draught fluttered the candle flame, and Mr. Jope had to shield it with a shaking palm. Once with a hoarse "What's that?" Mr. Adams halted and cast himself into a posture of defence—against his own shadow, black and amorphous, wavering on the wall.

They came to the iron-studded door.

"Open, you," commanded Mr. Jope under his breath. "And not too fast, mind—there was a breeze o' wind blowin' this arternoon. Steady does it—look out for the step, an' then straight forw——"

A howl drowned the last word, as Mr. Adams struck his shin against some obstacle and pitched headlong into darkness—a howl of pain blent with a dull jarring rumble. Silence followed, and out of the silence broke a faint groan.

"Bill! Bill Adams! Oh, Bill, for the Lord's sake ——!" Still mechanically shielding his candle, Mr. Jope staggered back a pace, and leaned against the stone door-jamb for support.

"Here!" sounded the voice of Bill, very faint in the darkness. "Here! fetch along the light, quick!"

"Wot's it?"

"Casks."

"Casks?"

"Kegs, then. I ought to know," responded Bill plaintively, "seeing as I pretty near broke my leg on one!"

Mr. Jope peered forward, holding the light high. In the middle of the cellar stood the quarter-puncheon and around it a whole regiment of small barrels. Half doubting his eyesight, he stooped to examine them. Around each keg was bound a sling of rope.

"Rope?" muttered Mr. Jope, stooping. "Foreign rope—left-handed rope——" And with that of a sudden he sat down on the nearest keg and began to laugh. "The old varmint! the darned old sinful methodeerin' varmint!"

"Oh, stow it, Ben! 'Tisn' manly." But still the unnatural laughter continued. "What in thunder——"

Bill Adams came groping between the kegs.

"Step an' bar the outer door, ye nincom! *Can't you see?* There's been a run o' goods; an' while that Coyne sat stuffin' us up with his ghosts, his boys were down below here loadin' us up with neat furrin sperrits —*loadin' us up*, mark you. My blessed word, the fun we'll have wi' that Coyne to-morrow!"

Mr. Adams in a mental fog groped his way to the door opening on the river steps, bolted it, groped his way back and stood scratching his head. A grin, grotesque in the wavering light, contorted the long lower half of the face for a moment and was gone. He seldom smiled.

"On the whole," said Mr. Adams, indicating the kegs, "I fancy these better'n the naked objects upstairs. Suppose we spend the rest o' the night here? It's easier," he added, "than runnin' to and fro for the drink. But what about liquor not accumylatin'?"

PART II

YE SEXES, GIVE EAR!

A STORY FROM A CHIMNEY-CORNER

A GOOD song, and thank' ee, Sir, for singing it! Time was, you'd never miss hearing it in these parts, whether 'twas feast or harvest-supper or Saturday night at the public. A virtuous good song, too; and the merry fellow that made it won't need to cast about and excuse himself when the graves open and he turns out with his fiddle under his arm. My own mother taught it to me; the more by token that she came from Saltash, and "Ye sexes, give ear" was a terrible favourite with the Saltash females by reason of Sally Hancock and her turn-to with the press-gang. Hey? You don't tell me, after singing the song, that you never heard tell of Sally Hancock? Well, if——! Here, take and fill my mug, somebody!

'Tis an instructive tale, too. . . . This Sally was a Saltash fishwoman, and you must have heard of *them*, at all events. There was Bess Rablin, too, and Mary Kitty Climo, and Thomasine Oliver, and Long Eliza that married Treleaven the hoveller, and Pengelly's wife Ann; these made up the crew Sally stroked in the great race. And besides these there was Nan Scantlebury—she took Bess Rablin's oar the second year, Bess being a bit too fond of lifting her elbow, which affected her health—and Phemy Sullivan, an Irishwoman, and Long Eliza's half-sister Charlotte Prowse, and Rebecca

Tucker, and Susan Trebilcock, that everybody called "Apern," and a dozen more maybe: powerful women every one, and proud of it. The town called them Sally Hancock's Gang, she being their leader, though they worked separate, shrimping, cockling, digging for lug and long-lining, bawling fish through Plymouth streets, even a hovelling job at times—nothing came amiss to them, and no weather. For a trip to Plymouth they'd put on sea-boots belike, or grey stockings and clogs: but at home they went bare-legged, and if they wore anything 'pon their heads 'twould be a handkerchief, red or yellow, with a man's hat clapped a-top; coats too, and guernseys like men's, and petticoats a short few inches longer; for I'm telling of that back-along time when we fought Boney and while seafaring men still wore petticoats—in these parts at any rate. Well, that's how Sally and her mates looked on week-a-days, and that's how they behaved: but you must understand that, though rough, they were respectable; the most of them Wesleyan Methodists; and on Sundays they'd put on bonnet and sit in chapel, and drink their tea afterwards and pick their neighbours to pieces just like ordinary Christians. Sal herself was a converted woman, and greatly exercised for years about her husband's condition, that kept a tailor's shop halfway down Fore Street and scoffed at the word of Grace; though he attended public worship, partly to please his customers and partly because his wife wouldn't let him off.

The way the fun started was this. In June month of the year 'five (that's the date my mother always gave) the Wesleyans up at the London Foundry sent a man down to preach a revival through Cornwall, starting

with Saltash. He had never crossed the Tamar before, but had lived the most of his life near Wolverhampton —a bustious little man, with a round belly and a bald head and high sense of his own importance. He arrived on a Saturday night, and attended service next morning, but not to take part in it: he "wished to look round," he said. So the morning was spent in impressing everyone with his shiny black suit of West-of-England broadcloth and his beautiful neckcloth and bunch of seals. But in the evening he climbed the pulpit; and there Old Nick himself, that lies in wait for preachers, must have tempted the poor fellow to preach on Womanly Perfection, taking his text from St. Paul.

He talked a brave bit about subjection, and how a woman ought to submit herself to her husband, and keep her head covered in places of public worship. And from that he passed on to say that 'twas to this beautiful submissiveness women owed their amazing power for good, and he, for his part, was going through Cornwall to tackle the womenfolk and teach 'em this beautiful lesson, and he'd warrant he'd leave the whole county a sight nearer righteousness than he found it. With that he broke out into extempory prayer for our dear sisters, as he called them, dusted his knees, and gave out the hymn, all as pleased as Punch.

Sal walked home from service alongside of her husband, very thoughtful. Deep down in the bottom of his heart he was afraid of her, and she knew it, though she made it a rule to treat him kindly. But knowing him for a monkey-spirited little man, and spiteful as well as funny, you could never be sure when he wouldn't break out. To-night he no sooner gets

inside his own door than says he with a dry sort of a chuckle:

"Powerful fine sermon, this evenin'. A man like that makes you *think*."

"Ch't!" says Sally, tossing her bonnet on to the easy chair and groping about for the tinder-box.

"Sort of doctrine that's badly needed in Saltash," says he. "But I'd ha' bet 'twould be wasted on you. Well, well, if you can't understand logic, fit and fetch supper, that's a good soul!"

"Ch't!" said Sally again, paying no particular attention, but wondering what the dickens had become of the tinder-box. She couldn't find it on the chimney-piece, so went off to fetch the kitchen one.

When she came back, there was my lord seated in the easy chair—that was hers by custom—and puffing away at his pipe—a thing not allowed until after supper. You see, he had collared the tinder-box when he first came in, and had hidden it from her.

Sal lit the lamp, quiet-like. "I s'pose you know you're sittin' 'pon my best bonnet?" said she.

This took him aback. He jumped up, found the bonnet underneath him sure enough, and tossed it on to the table. "Gew-gaws!" said he, settling himself again and puffing. "Gew-gaws and frippery! That man'll do good in this country; he's badly wanted."

Sal patted the straw of her bonnet into something like shape and smoothed out the ribbons. "If it'll make you feel like a breadwinner," said she, "there's a loaf in the bread-pan. The cold meat and pickles are under lock and key, and we'll talk o' them later." She fitted the bonnet on and began to tie the strings.

"You don't tell me, Sarah, that you mean to go

gadding out at this time of the evening?" cries he, a bit chapfallen, for he knew she carried the keys in an under-pocket beneath her skirt.

"And you don't suppose," answers she, "that I can spare the time to watch you play-actin' in my best chair? No, no, my little man! Sit there and amuse yourself: what *you* do don't make a ha'porth of odds. But there's others to be considered, and I'm going to put an end to this nonsense afore it spreads."

The time of the year, as I've told you, was near about midsummer, when a man can see to read print out-of-doors at nine o'clock. Service over, the preacher had set out for a stroll across the hayfields towards Trematon, to calm himself with a look at the scenery and the war-ships in the Hamoaze and the line of prison-hulks below, where in those days they kept the French prisoners. He was strolling back, with his hands clasped behind him under his coat-tails, when on the knap of the hill, between him and the town, he caught sight of a bevy of women seated among the hay-pooks—staid middle-aged women, all in dark shawls and bonnets, chattering there in the dusk. As he came along they all rose up together and dropped him a curtsy.

"Good evenin', preacher dear," says Sally, acting spokeswoman; "and a very fine night for the time of year."

I reckon that for a moment the preacher took a scare. Monstrous fine women they were to be sure, looming up over him in the dimmety light, and two or three of them tall as Grenadiers. But hearing himself forespoken so pleasantly, he came to a stand and peered at them through his gold-rimmed glasses.

"Ah, good evening, ladies!" says he. "You are, I presoom, members of the society that I've just had the privilege of addressin'?" And thereupon they dropped him another curtsy all together. "Like me, I dare say you find the scent of the new-mown hay refreshingly grateful. And what a scene! What a beautiful porch, so to speak, to the beauties of Cornwall!—beauties of which I have often heard tell."

"Yes, Sir," answers Sal demurely. "Did you ever hear tell, too, why Old Nick never came into Cornwall?"

"H'm — ha — some proverbial saying, no doubt? But—you will excuse me—I think we should avoid speaking lightly of the great Enemy of Mankind."

"He was afraid," pursued Sal, "of being put into a pie." She paused at that, giving her words time to sink in. The preacher didn't notice yet awhile that Long Eliza Treleaven and Thomasine Oliver had crept round a bit and planted themselves in the footpath behind him.

After a bit Sal let herself go in a comfortable smile, and says she, in a pretty, coaxing voice, "Sit yourself down, preacher, that's a dear: sit yourself down, nice and close, and have a talk!"

The poor fellow fetched a start at this. He didn't know, of course, that everyone's "my dear" in Cornwall, and I'm bound to say I've seen foreigners taken aback by it—folks like commercial travellers, not given to shyness as a rule.

"You'll excuse me, Madam."

"No, I won't: not if you don't come and sit down quiet. Bless the man, I'm not going to eat 'ee—wouldn't harm a hair of your dear little head, if you had any! What? You refuse?"

"How dare you, Madam!" The preacher drew himself up, mighty dignified. "How dare you address me in this fashion!"

"I'm addressin' you for your good," answered Sally. "We've been talkin' over your sermon, me and my friends here—all very respectable women—and we've made up our minds that it won't do. We can't have it 'pon our conscience to let a gentleman with your views go kicking up Jack's delight through the West. We owe something more to our sex. 'Wrestlin' with 'em—that was one of your expressions—'wrestlin' with our dear Cornish sisters'!"

"In the spirit—a figure of speech," explained the poor man, snappy-like.

Sal shook her head. "They know all about wrestlin' down yonder. I tell you, 'twon't do. You're a well-meaning man, no doubt; but you're terribly wrong on some points. You'd do an amazing amount of mischief if we let you run loose. But we couldn't take no such responsibility—indeed we couldn't: and the long and short of it is, you've got to go."

She spoke these last words very firmly. The preacher flung a glance round and saw he was in a trap.

"Such shameless behaviour——" he began.

"You've got to go back," repeated Sally, nodding her head at him. "Take my advice and go quiet."

"I can only suppose you to be intoxicated," said he, and swung round upon the path where Thomasine Oliver stood guard. "Allow me to pass, Madam, if you please!"

But here the mischief put it into Long Eliza to give his hat a flip by the brim. It dropped over his nose and rolled away in the grass. "Oh, what a dear little

bald head!" cried Long Eliza; "I declare I must kiss it or die!" She caught up a handful of hay as he stooped, and—well, well, Sir! Scandalous, as you say! Not a word beyond this would any of them tell: but I do believe the whole gang rolled the poor man in the hay and took a kiss off him—"making sweet hay," as 'tis called. 'Twas only known that he paid the bill for his lodging a little after dawn next morning, took up his bag, and passed down Fore Street towards the Quay. Maybe a boat was waiting for him there: at all events, he was never seen again—not on this side of Tamar.

Sal went back, composed as you please, and let herself in by the front door. In the parlour she found her man still seated in the easy chair and smoking, but sulky-like, and with most of his monkey-temper leaked out of him.

"What have you been doin', pray?" asks he.

Sal looked at him with a twinkle. "Kissin'," says she, untying her bonnet: and with that down she dropped on a chair and laughed till her sides ached.

Her husband ate humble pie that night before ever he set fork in the cold meat: and for some days after, though she kept a close eye on him, he showed no further sign of wanting to be lord of creation. "Nothing like promptness," thought Sally to herself. "If I hadn't taken that nonsense in hand straight off, there's no telling where it wouldn't have spread." By the end of the week following she had put all uneasiness out of her mind.

Next Saturday—as her custom was on Saturdays—she traded in Plymouth, and didn't reach home until

an hour or more past nightfall, having waited on the Barbican for the evening fish-auction, to see how prices were ruling. 'Twas near upon ten o'clock before she'd moored her boat, and as she went up the street past the "Fish and Anchor" she heard something that fetched her to a standstill.

She stood for a minute, listening; then walked in without more ado, set down her baskets in the passage, and pushed open the door of the bar-room. There was a whole crowd of men gathered inside, and the place thick with tobacco-smoke. And in the middle of this crew, with his back to the door, sat her husband piping out a song:

Ye sexes, give ear to my fancy;
In the praise of good women I sing;
It is not of Doll, Kate, or Nancy,
The mate of a clown nor a King—
With my fol-de-rol, tooral-i-lay!

Old Adam, when he was creyated,
Was lord of the Universe round;
Yet his happiness was not complated
Until that a helpmate he'd found.
With my fol-de-rol, tooral-i-lay!

He had all things for food that was wanting,
Which give us content in this life;
He had horses and foxes for hunting,
Which many love more than a wife,—

He had sung so far and was waving his pipe-stem for the chorus when the company looked up and saw Sal straddling in the doorway with her fists on her hips. The sight daunted them for a moment: but she

held up a finger, signing them to keep the news to themselves, and leaned her shoulder against the door-post with her eyes steady on the back of her husband's scrag neck. His fate was upon him, poor varmint, and on he went, as gleeful as a bird in a bath:

> He'd a garden so planted by natur'
> As man can't produce in this life;
> But yet the all-wise great Creaytor
> Perceived that he wanted a wife.—
> With his fol-de-rol, tooral-i-lay!

"You chaps might be a bit heartier with the chorus," he put in. "A man would almost think you was afraid of your wives overhearin':

> Old Adam was laid in a slumber,
> And there he lost part of his side;
> And when he awoke in great wonder
> He beyeld his beyeautiful bride.
> *With* my fol-de-rol, tooral——

Why, whatever's wrong with 'ee all? You're as melancholy as a passel of gib-cats." And with that he caught the eye of a man seated opposite, and slewed slowly round to the door.

I tell you that even Sal was forced to smile, and the rest, as you may suppose, rolled to and fro and laughed till they cried. But when the landlord called for order and they hushed themselves to hear more, the woman had put on a face that made her husband quake.

"Go ahead, Hancock!" cried one or two. "'With transport he gazèd——' Sing away, man:"

"I will not," said the tailor, very sulky. "This here's no fit place for women: and a man has his

feelin's. I'm astonished at you, Sarah—I reely am. The wife of a respectable tradesman!" But he couldn't look her straight in the face.

"Why, what's wrong with the company?" she asks, looking around. "Old, young, and middle-aged, I seem to know them all for Saltash men: faults, too, they have to my knowledge: but it passes me what I need to be afeared of. And only a minute since you was singing that your happiness wouldn't be completed until that a helpmate you'd found. Well, you've found her: so sing ahead and be happy."

"I will not," says he, still stubborn.

"Oh, yes you will, my little man," says she in a queer voice, which made him look up and sink his eyes again.

"Well," says he, making the best of it, "to please the missus, naybours, we'll sing the whole randigal through. And after that, Sarah"—here he pretended to look at her like one in command—"you'll walk home with me straight."

"You may lay to that," Sal promised him: and so, but in no very firm voice, he pitched to the song again:

> With transport he gazèd upon her,
> His happiness then was complate;
> And he blessed the celestial donor
> That on him bestowed such a mate—

"I reckon, friends, we'll leave out the chorus!"

They wouldn't hear of this, but ri-tooralled away with a will, Sal watching them the while from the doorway with her eyebrows drawn down, like one lost in thought.

She was not took out of his head,
To reign or to triumph o'er man;
She was not took out of his feet,
By man to be trampèd upon:
With my fol-de-rol, tooral-i-lay!

But she was took out of his side,
His equal and partner to be:
Though they be yunited in one,
Still the man is the top of the tree!
With my fol-de-rol, tooral-i-lay!

"Well, and what's wrong wi' that?" Hancock wound up, feeling for his courage again.

"Get along with 'ee, you ninth-part-of-a-man! *Me* took out of *your* side!"

"Be that as it may, the 'Fish and Anchor' is no place for discussing of it," the man answered, very dignified. "Enough said, my dear! We'll be getting along home." He stood up and knocked the ashes out of his pipe.

But Sally was not to be budged. "I knew how 'twould be," she spoke up, facing the company. "I took that preacher-fellow 'pon the ground hop, as I thought, and stopped his nonsense; but something whispered to me that 'twas a false hope. Evil communications corrupt good manners, and now the mischief's done. There's no peace for Saltash till you men learn your place again, and I'm resolved to teach it to 'ee. You want to know how? Well, to start with, by means of a board and a piece o' chalk, same as they teach at school nowadays."

She stepped a pace farther into the room, shut home the door behind her, and cast her eye over the ale-scores on the back of it. There were a dozen marks,

maybe, set down against her own man's name; but for the moment she offered no remark on this.

"Mr. Oke," says she, turning to the landlord, "I reckon you never go without a piece o' chalk in your pocket. Step this way, if you please, and draw a line for me round what these lords of creation owe ye for drink. Thank'ee. And now be good enough to fetch a chair and stand 'pon it; I want you to reach so high as you can—Ready? Now take your chalk and write, beginning near the top o' the door: 'I, Sarah Hancock——'"

Landlord Oke gave a flourish with his chalk and wrote, Sally dictating,—

"'I, Sarah Hancock—do hereby challenge all the men in Saltash Borough—that me and five other females of the said Borough—will row any six of them any distance from one to six statute miles—and will beat their heads off—pulling either single oars or double paddles or in ran-dam—the stakes to be six pound a side. And I do further promise, if beaten, to discharge all scores below.'

"Now the date, please—and hand me the chalk."

She reached up and signed her name bold and free, being a fair scholar. "And now, my little fellow," says she, turning to her husband, "put down that pipe and come'st along home. The man's at the top of the tree, is he? You'll wish you were, if I catch you at any more tricks!"

Well, at first the mankind at the "Fish and Anchor" allowed that Sal couldn't be in earnest; this challenge of hers was all braggadoshy; and one or two went so far as to say 'twould serve her right if she was taken at her word. In fact, no one treated it seriously until

four days later, at high-water, when the folks that happened to be idling 'pon the Quay heard a splash off Runnell's boat-building yard, and, behold! off Runnell's slip there floated a six-oared gig, bright as a pin with fresh paint. 'Twas an old condemned gig, that had lain in his shed ever since he bought it for a song off the *Indefatigable* man-o'-war, though now she looked almost too smart to be the same boat. Sally had paid him to put in a couple of new strakes and plane out a brand-new set of oars in place of the old ashen ones, and had painted a new name beneath the old one on the sternboard, so that now she was the *Indefatigable Woman* for all the world to see. And that very evening Sally and five of her mates paddled her past the Quay on a trial spin, under the eyes of the whole town.

There was a deal of laughing up at the "Fish and Anchor" that night, the most of the customers still treating the affair as a joke. But Landlord Oke took a more serious view.

"'Tis all very well for you fellows to grin," says he, "but I've been trying to make up in my mind the crew that's going to beat these females, and, by George! I don't find it so easy. There's the boat, too."

"French-built, and leaks like a five-barred gate," said somebody. "The Admiralty condemned her five year' ago."

"A leak can be patched, and the Admiralty's condemning goes for nothing in a case like this. I tell you that boat has handsome lines—handsome as you'd wish to see. You may lay to it that what Sal Hancock doesn't know about a boat isn't worth knowing."

"All the same, I'll warrant she never means to row

a race in that condemned old tub. She've dragged it out just for practice, and painted it up to make a show. When the time comes—if ever it do—she'll fit and borrow a new boat off one of the war-ships. We can do the same."

"Granted that you can, there's the question of the crew. Sal has her thwarts manned—or womanned, as you choose to put it—and maybe a dozen reserves to pick from in case of accident. She means business, I tell you. There's Regatta not five weeks away, and pretty fools we shall look if she sends round the crier on Regatta Day 'O-yessing' to all the world that Saltash men can't raise a boat's crew to match a passel of females, and two of 'em"—he meant Mary Kitty Climo and Ann Pengelly—"mothers of long families."

They discussed it long and they discussed it close, and this way and that way, until at last Landlord Oke had roughed-out a crew. There was no trouble about a stroke. That thwart went *nem. con.* to a fellow called Seth Ede, that worked the ferry and had won prizes in his day all up and down the coast: indeed, the very Plymouth men had been afraid of him for two or three seasons before he gave up racing, which was only four years ago. Some doubted that old Roper Retallack, who farmed the ferry that year, would spare Seth on Regatta Day: but Oke undertook to arrange this. Thwart No. 4 went with no more dispute to a whackin' big waterman by the name of Tremenjous Hosken, very useful for his weight, though a trifle thick in the waist. As for strength, he could break a pint mug with one hand, creaming it between his fingers. Then there was Jago the Preventive man, light but wiry, and a very tricky wrestler: "a proper angle-twitch of

a man," said one of the company; "stank[1] 'pon both ends of 'en, and he'll rise up in the middle and laugh at 'ee." So they picked Jago for boat-oar. For No. 5, after a little dispute, they settled on Tippet Harry, a boat-builder working in Runnell's yard, by reason that he'd often pulled behind Ede in the double-sculling, and might be trusted to set good time to the bow-side. Nos. 2 and 3 were not so easily settled, and they discussed and put aside half a score before offering one of the places to a long-legged youngster whose name I can't properly give you: he was always called Freckly-Faced Joe, and worked as a saddler's apprentice. In the end he rowed 2; but No. 3 they left vacant for the time, while they looked around for likely candidates.

Landlord Oke made no mistake when he promised that Sally meant business. Two days later she popped her head in at his bar-parlour—'twas in the slack hours of the afternoon, and he happened to be sitting there all by himself, tipping a sheaf of churchwarden clays with sealing-wax—and says she:

"What's the matter with your menkind?"

"Restin'," says Oke with a grin. "I don't own 'em, missus; but, from what I can hear, they're restin' and recoverin' their strength."

"I've brought you the stakes from our side," says Sally, and down she slaps a five-pound note and a sovereign upon the table.

"Take 'em up, missus—take 'em up. I don't feel equal to the responsibility. This here's a public challenge, hey?"

"The publicker the better."

"Then we'll go to the Mayor about it and ask his

[1] Tread.

Worship to hold the stakes." Oke was chuckling to himself all this while, the reason being that he'd managed to bespeak the loan of a six-oared galley belonging to the Water-Guard, and, boat for boat, he made no doubt she could show her heels to the *Indefatigable Woman*. He unlocked his strong-box, took out and pocketed a bag of money, and reached his hat off its peg. "I suppose 'twouldn't do to offer you my arm?" says he.

"Folks would talk, Mr. Oke—thanking you all the same."

So out they went, and down the street side by side, and knocked at the Mayor's door. The Mayor was taking a nap in his back-parlour with a handkerchief over his face. He had left business soon after burying his wife, who had kept him hard at work at the cheese-mongering, and now he could sleep when he chose. But he woke up very politely to attend to his visitors' business.

"Yes, for sure, I'll hold the stakes," said he: "and I'll see it put in big print on the Regatta-bill. It ought to attract a lot of visitors. But lor' bless you, Mr. Oke!—if you win, it'll do *me* no good. She"—meaning his wife—"has gone to a land where I'll never be able to crow over her."

"Your Worship makes sure, I see, that we women are going to be beat?" put in Sal.

"Tut-tut!" says the Mayor. "They've booked Seth Ede for stroke." And with that he goes very red in the gills and turns to Landlord Oke. "But perhaps I oughtn't to have mentioned that?" says he.

"Well," says Sal, "you've a-let the cat out of the bag, and I see that all you men in the town are in

league. But a challenge is a challenge, and I mustn't go back on it." Indeed, in her secret heart she was cheerful, knowing the worst, and considering it none so bad: and after higgling a bit, just to deceive him, she took pretty well all the conditions of the race as Oke laid 'em down. A tearing long course it was to be, too, and pretty close on five miles: start from near-abouts where the training-ship lays now, down to a mark-boat somewheres off Torpoint, back, and finish off Saltash Quay.

"My dears," she said to her mates later on, "I don't mind telling you I was all of a twitter, first-along, wondering what card that man Oke was holding back—he looked so sly and so sure of hisself. But if he've no better card to play than Seth Ede, we can sleep easy."

"Seth Ede's a powerful strong oar," Bess Rablin objected.

"*Was*, you mean. He've a-drunk too much beer these four years past to last over a five-mile course; let be that never was his distance. And here's another thing: they've picked Tremenjous Hosken for one th'art."

"And he's as strong as a bullock."

"I dessay: but Seth Ede pulls thirty-eight or thirty-nine to the minute all the time he's racing—never a stroke under. I've watched him a score o' times. If you envy Hosken his inside after two miles o' *that*, you must be like Pomery's pig—in love with pain. They've hired or borrowed the Preventive boat, I'm told; and it's the best they could do. She's new, and she looks pretty. She'll drag aft if they put their light weights in the bows: still, she's a good boat. I'm not

afeared of her, though. From all I can hear, the *Woman* was known for speed in her time, all through the fleet. You can *feel* she's fast, and *see* it, if you've half an eye: and the way she travels between the strokes is a treat. The Mounseers can build boats. But oh, my dears, you'll have to pull and stay the course, or in Saltash the women take second place for ever!"

"Shan't be worse off than other women, even if that happens," said Rebecca Tucker, that was but a year married and more than half in love with her man. Sally had been in two minds about promoting Rebecca to the bow-oar in place of Ann Pengelly, that had been clipping the stroke short in practice: but after that speech she never gave the woman another thought.

Next evening the men brought out their opposition boat—she was called the *Nonpareil*—and tried a spin in her. They had found a man for No. 3 oar—another of the Water-Guard, by name Mick Guppy and by nation Irish, which Sal swore to be unfair. She didn't lodge any complaint, however: and when her mates called out that 'twas taking a mean advantage, all she'd say was: "Saltash is Saltash, my dears; and I won't go to maintain that a Saltash crew is anyways improved by a chap from Dundalk."

So no protest was entered. I needn't tell you that, by this time, news of the great race had spread to Plymouth, and north away to Callington and all the country round. Crowds came out every evening to watch the two boats at their practising; and sometimes, as they passed one another, Seth Ede, who had the reputation for a wag, would call out to Sal and offer her the odds by way of chaff. Sal never answered. The woman was in deadly earnest, and moreover, I dare

say, a bit timmersome, now that the whole Borough had its eyes on her, and defeat meant disgrace.

She never showed a sign of any doubt, though; and when the great day came, she surpassed herself by the way she dressed. I dare say you've noticed that when women take up a man's job they're inclined to overdo it; and when Sal came down that day with a round tarpaulin-hat stuck on the back of her head, and her hair plaited in a queue like a Jack Tar's, her spiteful little husband fairly danced.

"'Tis onwomanly," said he. "Go upstairs and take it off!"

"Ch't," said she, "if you're so much upset by a tarpaulin-hat, you've had a narra escape; for 'tis nothing to the costume I'd a mind to wear—and I'd a mind to make you measure the whole crew for it."

And as it was, I'm told, half the sightseers that poured into Saltash that day in their hundreds couldn't tell the women's crew from the men's by their looks or their dress. And these be the names and weights, more or less:

The *Indefatigable Woman*: Bow, Ann Pengelly, something under eleven stone; No. 2, Thomasine Oliver, ditto; No. 3, Mary Kitty Climo, eleven and a half; No. 4, Long Eliza, thirteen and over, a woman very heavy in the bone; No. 5, Bess Rablin, twelve stone, most of it in the ribs and shoulders; Stroke, Sarah Hancock, twelve stone four; Coxswain, Ann Pengelly's fourth daughter Wilhelmina, weight about six stone. The *Indefatigable Woman* carried a small distaff in the bows, and her crew wore blue jerseys and yellow handkerchiefs.

The *Nonpareil*: Bow, T. Jago, ten stone and a little

over; No. 2, Freckly-Faced Joe, twelve stone; No. 3, M. Guppy, twelve stone and a half; No. 4, Tremenjous Hosken, eighteen stone ten; No. 5, Tippet Harry, twelve stone eight; Stroke, Seth Ede, eleven six. And I don't know who the boy was that steered. The *Nonpareil* carried a red, white, and blue flag, and her crew wore striped jerseys, white and blue.

They were started by pistol; and Seth Ede, jumping off with a stroke of forty to the minute, went ahead at once. In less than twenty strokes he was clear, the *Nonpareil* lifting forward in great heaves that made the spectators tell each other that though 'twas no race they had seen something for their money. They didn't see how sweetly the other boat held her way between the strokes, nor note that Sally had started at a quiet thirty-four, the whole crew reaching well out and keeping their blades covered to the finish—coming down to the stroke steadily, too, though a stiffish breeze was with them as well as the tide.

I suppose the longest lead held by the *Nonpareil* during the race was a good forty yards. She must have won this within four minutes of starting, and for half a mile or so she kept it. Having so much in hand, Ede slowed down—for flesh and blood couldn't keep up such a rate of striking over the whole course—and at once he found out his mistake. The big man Hosken, who had been pulling with his arms only, and pulling like a giant, didn't understand swinging out; tried it, and was late on stroke every time. This flurried Ede, who was always inclined to hurry the pace, and he dropped slower yet—dropped to thirty-five, maybe, a rate at which he did himself no justice, bucketting forward fast, and waiting over the beginning

till he'd missed it. In discontent with himself he quickened again; but now the oars behind him were like a peal of bells. By sheer strength they forced the boat along somehow, and with the tide under her she travelled. But the *Indefatigable Woman* by this time was creeping up.

They say that Sally rowed that race at thirty-four from the start to within fifty yards of the finish; rowed it minute after minute without once quickening or once dropping a stroke. Folks along shore timed her with their watches. If that's the truth, 'twas a marvellous feat, and the woman accounted for it afterwards by declaring that all the way she scarcely thought for one second of the other boat, but set her stroke to a kind of tune in her head, saying the same verse over and over:

> But she was took out of his side,
> His equal and partner to be:
> Though they be yunited in one,
> Still the man is the top of the tree!
> With my fol-de-rol, tooral-i-lay—We'll see about *that!*

The *Indefatigable Woman* turned the mark not more than four lengths astern. They had wind and tide against them now, and with her crew swinging out slow and steady, pulling the stroke clean through with a hard finish, she went up hand-over-fist. The blades of the *Nonpareil* were knocking up water like a moorhen. Tremenjous Hosken had fallen to groaning between the strokes, and I believe that from the mark-boat homeward he was no better than a passenger—an eighteen-stone passenger, mind you. The only man to keep it lively was little Jago at bow, and Seth Ede —to do him justice—pulled a grand race for pluck.

He might have spared himself, though. Another hundred yards settled it: the *Indefatigable Woman* made her overlap and went by like a snake, and the Irishman pulled in his oar and said:

"Well, Heaven bless the leddies, anyway!"

Seth Ede turned round and swore at him vicious-like, and he fell to rowing again: but the whole thing had become a procession. "Eyes in the boat!" commanded Sal, pulling her crew together as they caught sight of their rivals for the first time and, for a stroke or two, let the time get ragged. She couldn't help a lift in her voice, though, any more than she could help winding up with a flourish as they drew level with Saltash town, a good hundred yards ahead, and heard the band playing and the voices cheering. "Look out for the quicken!"—and up went a great roar as the women behind her picked the quicken up and rattled past the Quay and the winning-gun at forty to the minute!

They had just strength enough left to toss oars: and then they leaned forward with their heads between their arms, panting and gasping out, "Well rowed, Sal!" "Oh—oh—well rowed all!" and letting the delight run out of them in little sobs of laughter. The crowd ashore, too, was laughing and shouting itself hoarse. I'm sorry to say a few of them jeered at the *Nonpareil* as she crawled home: but, on the whole, the men of Saltash took their beating handsome.

This don't include Sal's husband, though. Landlord Oke was one of the first to shake her by the hand as she landed, and the Mayor turned over the stakes to her there and then with a neat little speech. But Tailor Hancock went back home with all kinds of

ugliness and uncharitableness working in his little heart. He cursed Regatta Day for an interruption to trade, and Saltash for a town given up to idleness and folly. A man's business in this world was to toil for his living in the sweat of his brow; and so, half an hour later, he told his wife.

The crowd had brought her along to her house door: and there she left 'em with a word or two of thanks, and went in very quiet. Her victory had uplifted her, of course; but she knew that her man would be sore in his feelings, and she meant to let him down gently. She'd have done it, too, if he'd met her in the ordinary way: but when, after searching the house, she looked into the little back workshop and spied him seated on the bench there, cross-legged and solemn as an idol, stitching away at a waistcoat, she couldn't hold back a grin.

"Why, whatever's the matter with you?" she asked.

"Work," says he, in a hollow voice. "Work is the matter. I can't see a house—and one that used to be a happy home—go to rack and ruin without some effort to prevent it."

"I wouldn't begin on Regatta Day, if I was you," says Sal cheerfully. "Has old Smithers been inquiring again about that waistcoat?"

"He have not."

"Then he's a patient man: for to my knowledge this is the third week you've been putting him off with excuses."

"I thank the Lord," says her husband piously, "that more work gets put on me than I can keep pace with. And well it is, when a man's wife takes to wagering and betting and pulling in low boat-races to the dis-

grace of her sex. *Someone* must keep the roof over our heads: but the end may come sooner than you expect," says he, and winds up with a tolerable imitation of a hacking cough.

"I took three pairs of soles and a brill in the trammel this very morning; and if you've put a dozen stitches in that old waistcoat, 'tis as much as ever! I can see in your eye that you know all about the race; and I can tell from the state of your back that you watched it from the Quay, and turned into the "Sailor's Return" for a drink. Hockaday got taken in over that blue-wash for his walls: it comes off as soon as you rub against it."

"I'll trouble you not to spy upon my actions, Madam," says he.

"Man alive, *I* don't mind your taking a glass now and then in reason—specially on Regatta Day! And as for the 'Sailor's Return,' 'tis a respectable house. I hope so, anyhow, for we've ordered supper there to-night."

"Supper! You've ordered supper at the 'Sailor's Return'?"

Sal nodded. "Just to celebrate the occasion. We thought, first-along, of the 'Green Dragon': but the 'Dragon's' too grand a place for ease, and Bess allowed 'twould look like showing off. She voted for cosiness: so the 'Sailor's Return' it is, with roast ducks and a boiled leg of mutton and plain gin-and-water."

"Settin' yourselves up to be men, I s'pose?" he sneered.

"Not a bit of it," answered Sal. "There'll be no speeches."

She went off to the kitchen, put on the kettle, and made him a dish of tea. In an ordinary way she'd have paid no heed to his tantrums: but just now she

felt very kindly disposed t'wards everybody, and really wished to chat over the race with him—treating it as a joke now that her credit was saved, and never offering to crow over him. But the more she fenced about to be agreeable the more he stitched and sulked.

"Well, I can't miss *all* the fun," said she at last: and so, having laid supper for him, and put the jug where he could find it and draw his cider, she clapped on her hat and strolled out.

He heard her shut-to the front door, and still he went on stitching. When the dusk began to fall he lit a candle, fetched himself a jugful of cider, and went back to his work. For all the notice Sal was ever likely to take of his perversity, he might just as well have stepped out into the streets and enjoyed himself: but he was wrought up into that mood in which a man will hurt himself for the sake of having a grievance. All the while he stitched he kept thinking, "Look at me here, galling my fingers to the bone, and that careless fly-by-night wife o' mine carousin' and gallivantin' down at the 'Sailor's Return'! Maybe she'll be sorry for it when I'm dead and gone; but at present if there's an injured, misunderstood poor mortal in Saltash Town, I'm that man." So he went on, until by and by, above the noise of the drum and cymbals outside the penny theatre, and the hurdy-gurdies, and the showmen bawling down by the waterside, he heard voices yelling and a rush of folks running down the street past his door. He knew they had been baiting a bull in a field at the head of the town, and, the thought coming into his head that the animal must have broken loose, he hopped off his bench, ran fore to the front door, and peeked his head out cautious-like.

What does he see coming down the street in the dusk but half a dozen sailor-men with an officer in charge! Of course he knew the meaning of it at once. 'Twas a press-gang off one of the ships in Hamoaze or the Sound, that was choosing Regatta Night to raid the streets and had landed at the back of the town and climbed over the hill to take the crowds by surprise. They'd made but a poor fist of this, by reason of the officer letting his gang get out of hand at the start; and by their gait 'twas pretty plain they had collared a plenty of liquor up the street. But while Hancock peeped out, taking stock of them, a nasty monkey-notion crept into his head, and took hold of all his spiteful little nature; and says he, pushing the door a bit wider as the small officer—he was little taller than a midshipman—came swearing by:

"Beg your pardon, Sir!"

"You'd best take in your head and close the door upon it," snaps the little officer. "These fools o' mine have got their shirts out, and are liable to make mistakes to-night."

"What, *me*?—a poor tailor with a hackin' cough!" But to himself: "So much the better," he says, and up he speaks again. "Beggin' your pardon humbly, Commander; but I might put you in the way of the prettiest haul. There's a gang of chaps enjoyin' theirselves down at the 'Sailor's Return,' off the Quay, and not a 'protection' among them. Fine lusty fellows, too! They might give your men a bit of trouble to start with——"

"Why are you telling me this?" the officer interrupts, suspicious-like.

"That's my affair," says Hancock boldly, seeing that

he nibbled. "Put it down to love o' my country, if you like; and take my advice or leave it, just as you please. I'm not asking for money, so you won't be any the poorer."

"Off the Quay, did you say? Has the house a Quay-door?"

"It has: but you needn't to trouble about that. They can't escape that way, I promise you, having no boat alongside."

The little officer turned and whispered for a while with two of the soberest of his gang: and presently these whispered to two more, and the four of them marched away up the hill.

"'*HANCOCK—TAILOR*,'" reads out the officer aloud, stepping back into the roadway and peering up at the shop-front. "Very well, my man, you'll hear from us again——"

"I'm not askin' for any reward, Sir."

"So you've said: and I was about to say that, if this turns out to be a trick, you'll hear from us again, and in a way you'll be sorry for. And now, once more, take your ugly head inside. 'Tis my duty to act on information, but I don't love informers."

For the moment the threat made the tailor uncomfortable: but he felt pretty sure the sailors, when they discovered the trick, wouldn't be able to do him much harm. The laugh of the whole town would be against them: and on Regatta Night the press—unpopular enough at the best of times—would gulp down the joke and make the best of it. He went back to his bench; but on second thoughts not to his work. 'Twould be on the safe side, anyway, to be not at home for an hour or two, in case the sailors came back to cry quits.

Playing the lonely martyr, too, wasn't much fun with this mischief working inside of him and swelling his lungs like barm.[1] He took a bite of bread and a sup of cider, blew out the candle, let himself forth into the street after a glance to make sure that all was clear, and headed for the "Fish and Anchor."

He found the bar-room crowded, but not with the usual Regatta Night throng of all-sorts. The drinkers assembled were either burgesses like himself or water-side men with protection-papers in their pockets: for news of the press-gang had run through the town like wildfire, and the company had given over discussing the race of the day and taken up with this new subject. Among the protected men his eye lit on Treleaven the hoveller, husband to Long Eliza, and Caius Pengelly, husband to Ann, that had pulled bow in the race. He winked to them mighty cunning. The pair of 'em seemed dreadfully cast down, and he knew a word to put them in heart again.

"Terrible blow for us, mates, this woman's mutiny!" says he, dropping into a chair careless-like, pulling out a short pipe, and speaking high to draw the company's attention.

"Oh, stow it!" says Caius Pengelly, very sour. "We'd found suthin' else to talk about; and if the women have the laugh of us to-day, who's responsible, after all? Why, you—*you*, with your darned silly song about Adam and Eve! If you hadn't provoked your wife, this here wouldn't ha' happened."

"Indeed?" says the monkey-fellow, crossing his legs and puffing. "So you've found something better to talk about? What's that, I'd like to know?"

[1] Yeast.

"Why, there's a press-gang out," says Treleaven. "But there! a fellow with your shaped legs don't take no interest in press-gangs, I reckon."

"Ah, to be sure," says the little man—but he winced and uncrossed his legs all the same, feeling sorry he'd made 'em so conspicuous—"ah, to be sure, a press-gang! I met 'em; but, as it happens, that's no change of subject."

"Us don't feel in no mood to stomach your fun to-night, Hancock; and so I warn 'ee," put in Pengelly, who had been drinking more than usual and spoke thick. "If you've a meaning up your sleeve, you'd best shake it out."

Hancock chuckled. "You fellows have no invention," he said; "no resource at all, as I may call it. You stake on this race, and, when the women beat you, you lie down and squeal. Well, you may thank me that I'm built different: I bide my time, but when the clock strikes I strike with it. I never did approve of women dressing man-fashion: but what's the use of making a row in the house? 'The time is bound to come,' said I to myself; and come it has. If you want a good story cut short, I met the press-gang just now and turned 'em on to raid the 'Sailor's Return': and if by to-morrow the women down there have any crow over us, then I'm a Dutchman, that's all!"

"Bejimbers, Hancock," says Treleaven, standing up and looking uneasy, "you carry it far, I must say!"

"Far? A jolly good joke, *I* should call it," answers Hancock, making bold to cross his legs again.

And with that there comes a voice crying pillaloo in the passage outside; and, without so much as a knock, a woman runs in with a face like a sheet—Sam Hockaday's wife, from the "Sailor's Return."

"Oh, Mr. Oke—Mr. Oke, whatever is to be done! The press has collared Sally Hancock and all her gang! Some they've kilt, and wounded others, and all they've a-bound and carried off and shipped at the Quay-door. Oh, Mr. Oke, our house is ruined for ever!"

The men gazed at her with their mouths open. Hancock found his legs somehow; but they shook under him, and all of a sudden he felt himself turning white and sick.

"You don't mean to tell me——" he began.

But Pengelly rounded on him and took him by the ear so that he squeaked. "Where's my wife, you miserable joker, you?" demanded Pengelly.

"They c-can't be in earnest!"

"You'll find that I am," said Pengelly, feeling in his breeches-pocket, and drawing out a clasp-knife almost a foot long. "What's the name of the ship?"

"I—I don't know! I never inquired! Oh, please let me go, Mr. Pengelly! Han't I got my feelings, same as yourself?"

"There's a score of vessels atween this and Cawsand," put in Treleaven, catching his breath like a man hit in the wind, "and half a dozen of 'em ready to weigh anchor any moment. There's naught for it but to take a boat and give chase."

Someone suggested that Sal's own boat, the *Indefatigable Woman*, would be lying off Runnell's Yard; and down to the waterside they all ran, Pengelly gripping the tailor by the arm. They found the gig moored there on a frape, dragged her to shore, and tumbled in. Half a dozen men seized and shipped the oars: the tailor pitched forward and driven to take the bow oar. Voices from shore sang out all manner of different advice: but

'twas clear that no one knew which way the press-boat had taken, nor to what ship she belonged.

To Hancock 'twas all like a sick dream. He hated the water; he had on his thinnest clothes; the night began to strike damp and chilly, with a lop of tide running up from Hamoaze and the promise of worse below. Pengelly, who had elected himself captain, swore to hail every ship he came across: and he did—though from the first he met with no encouragement. "Ship, ahoy!" he shouted, coming down with a rush upon the stern-windows of the first and calling to all to hold water. "Ahoy! Ship!"

A marine poked his head over the taffrail. "Ship it is," said he. "And what may be the matter with you?"

"Be you the ship that has walked off with half a dozen women from Saltash?"

The marine went straight off and called the officer of the watch, "Boat-load of drunk chaps under our stern, Sir," says he, saluting. "Want to know if we've carried off half a dozen women from Saltash."

'Empty a bucket of slops on 'em," said the officer of the watch, "and tell 'em, with my compliments, that we haven't."

The marine saluted, hunted up a slop-bucket, and poured it over with the message. "If you want to know more, try the guard-ship," said he.

"That's all very well, but where in thunder *be* the guard-ship?" said poor Pengelly, scratching his head.

Everyone knew, but everyone differed by something between a quarter and half a mile. They tried ship after ship, getting laughter from some and abuse from others. And now, to make matters worse, the wind

chopped and blew up from the sou'-west, with a squall of rain and a wobble of sea that tried Hancock's stomach sorely. At one time they went so far astray in the dark as to hail one of the prison-hulks, and only sheered off when the sentry challenged and brought his musket down upon the bulwarks with a rattle. A little later, off Torpoint, they fell in with the water-police, who took them for a party rowing home to Plymouth from the Regatta, and threatened 'em with the lock-up if they didn't proceed quiet. Next they fell foul of the guard-ship, and their palaver fetched the Admiral himself out upon the little balcony in his night-shirt. When he'd done talking they were a hundred yards off, and glad of it.

Well, Sir, they tried ship after ship, the blessed night through, till hope was nigh dead in them, and their bodies ached with weariness and hunger. Long before they reached Devil's Point the tumble had upset Hancock's stomach completely. He had lost his oar; somehow it slipped off between the thole-pins, and in his weakness he forgot to cry out that 'twas gone. It drifted away in the dark—the night all round was black as your hat, the squalls hiding the stars—and he dropped off his thwart upon the bottom-boards. "I'm a dying man," he groaned, "and I don't care. I don't care how soon it comes! 'Tis all over with me, and I shall never see my dear Sally no more!"

So they tossed till day broke and showed Drake's Island ahead of them, and the whole Sound running with a tidy send of sea from the south'ard, grey and forlorn. Some were for turning back, but Pengelly wouldn't hear of it. "We must make Cawsand Bay," says he, "if it costs us our lives. Maybe we'll

find half a dozen ships anchored there and ready for sea."

So away for Cawsand they pulled, hour after hour, Hancock all the while wanting to die, and wondering at the number of times an empty man could answer up to the call of the sea.

The squalls had eased soon after daybreak, and the sky cleared and let through the sunshine as they opened the bay and spied two sloops-of-war and a frigate riding at anchor there. Pulling near with the little strength left in them, they could see that the frigate was weighing for sea. She had one anchor lifted and the other chain shortened in: her top-sails and topgallant sails were cast off, ready to cant her at the right moment for hauling in. An officer stood ready by the crew manning the capstan, and right aft two more officers were pacing back and forth with their hands clasped under their coat-tails.

"Lord!" groaned Pengelly, "if my poor Ann's aboard of she, we'll never catch her!" He sprang up in the stern sheets and hailed with all his might.

Small enough chance had his voice of reaching her, the wind being dead contrary: and yet for the moment it looked as if the two officers aft had heard; for they both stepped to the ship's side, and one put up a telescope and handed it to the other. And still the crew of the gig, staring over their shoulders while they pulled weakly, could see the men by the capstan standing motionless and waiting for orders.

"Seems a'most as if they were expectin' somebody," says Pengelly with a sudden hopefulness: and with that Treleaven, that was pulling stroke, casts his eyes over his right shoulder and gives a gasp.

"Good Lord, look!" says he. "The tender!"

And sure enough, out of the thick weather rolling up away over Bovisand they spied now a Service cutter bearing across close-hauled, leaning under her big tops'l and knocking up the water like ginger-beer with the stress of it. When first sighted she couldn't have been much more than a mile distant, and, pull as they did with the remains of their strength, she crossed their bows a good half-mile ahead, taking in tops'l as she fetched near the frigate.

"Use your eyes—oh, use your eyes!" called out Pengelly: but no soul could they see on her besides two or three of the crew forward and a little officer standing aft beside the helmsman. Pengelly ran forward, leaping the thwarts, and fetched the tailor a rousing kick. "Sit up!" he ordered, "and tell us if that's the orficer you spoke to last night!"

The poor creature hoisted himself upon his thwart, looking as yellow as a bad egg. "I—I think that's the man," said he, straining his eyes, and dropped his head overside.

"Pull for your lives, boys," shouted Pengelly. And they did pull, to the last man. They pulled so that they reached the frigate just as the tender, having run up in the wind and fallen alongside, began uncovering hatches.

Two officers were leaning overside and watching—and a couple of the tender's crew were reaching down their arms into the hold. They were lifting somebody through the hatchway, and the body they lifted clung for a moment to the hatchway coaming, to steady itself.

"Sally!" screamed a voice from the gig.

The little officer in the stern of the tender cast a

glance back at the sound and knew the tailor at once. He must have owned sharp sight, that man.

"Oh, you've come for your money, have you?" says he. And, looking up at the two officers overhead, he salutes, saying: "We've made a tidy haul, Sir—thanks to that man."

"I don't want your money. I want my wife!" yelled Hancock.

"And I mine!" yelled Pengelly.

"And I mine!" yelled Treleaven.

By this time the gig had fallen alongside the tender, and the women in the tender's hold were coming up to daylight, one by one. Sal herself stood watching the jail-delivery; and first of all she blinked a bit, after the darkness below, and next she let out a laugh, and then she reached up a hand and began unplaiting her pigtail.

"Be you the Captain of this here ship?" asks she, looking up and addressing herself to one of the officers leaning overside.

"Yes, my man; this here's the *Ranger* frigate, and I'm her Captain. I'm sorry for you—it goes against my grain to impress men in this fashion: but the law's the law, and we're ready for sea, and if you've any complaints to make I hope you'll cut 'em short."

"I don't know," says Sal, "that I've any complaints to make, except that I was born a woman. That I went on to marry that pea-green tailor yonder is my own fault, and we'll say no more about it."

By this time all the women on the tender were following Sal's example and unshredding their back-hair. By this time, too, every man aboard the frigate was gathered at the bulwarks, looking down in wonderment. There

beneath 'em stood a joke too terrible to be grasped in one moment.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Rogers," says the Captain in a voice cold as a knife, "but you appear to have made a mistake."

The little officer had turned white as a sheet: but he managed to get in his say before the great laugh came. "I have, Sir, to my sorrow," says he, turning viciously on Hancock; "a mistake to be cast up against me through my career. But I reckon," he adds, "I leave the punishment for it in good hands." He glanced at Sally.

"You may lay to that, young man!" says she heartily. "You may lay to that every night when you says your prayers."

FRENCHMAN'S CREEK

A REPORTED TALE

FRENCHMAN'S CREEK runs up between overhanging woods from the western shore of Helford River, which flows down through an earthly paradise and meets the sea midway between Falmouth and the dreadful Manacles—a river of gradual golden sunsets such as Wilson painted; broad-bosomed, holding here and there a village as in an arm maternally crook'd, but with a brooding face of solitude. Off the main flood lie creeks where the oaks dip their branches in the high tides, where the stars are glassed all night long without a ripple, and where you may spend whole days with no company but herons and sandpipers:

> Helford River, Helford River,
> Blessèd may you be!
> We sailed up Helford River
> By Durgan from the sea. . . .

And about three-quarters of a mile above the ferry-crossing (where is the best anchorage) you will find the entrance of the creek they call Frenchman's, with a cob-built ruin beside it, and perhaps, if you come upon it in the morning sunlight, ten or a dozen herons aligned like statues on the dismantled walls.

Now, why they call it Frenchman's Creek no one is supposed to know, but this story will explain. And the story I heard on the spot from an old verderer,

who had it from his grandfather, who bore no unimportant part in it—as will be seen. Maybe you will find it out of keeping with its scenery. In my own words you certainly would: and so I propose to relate it just as the verderer told it to me.

I

First of all you'll let me say that a bad temper is an affliction, whoever owns it, and shortening to life. I don't know what your opinion may be: but my grandfather was parish constable in these parts for forty-seven years, and you'll find it on his headstone in Manaccan churchyard that he never had a cross word for man, woman, or child. He took no credit for it: it ran in the family, and to this day we're all terribly mild to handle.

Well, if ever a man was born bad in his temper, 'twas Captain Bligh, that came from St. Tudy parish, and got himself known to all the world over that dismal business aboard the *Bounty*. Yes, Sir, that's the man —"Breadfruit Bligh," as they called him. They made an Admiral of him in the end, but they never cured his cussedness: and my grandfather, that followed his history (and good reason for why) from the day he first set foot in this parish, used to rub his hands over every fresh item of news. "Darn it!" he'd say, "here's that old Turk broke loose again. Lord, if he ain't a warrior!" Seemed as if he took a delight in the man, and kept a sort of tenderness for him till the day of his death.

Bless you, though folks have forgotten it, that little

affair of the *Bounty* was only the beginning of Bligh. He was a left'nant when it happened, and the King promoted him post-captain straight away. Later on, no doubt because of his experiences in mutinies, he was sent down to handle the big one at the Nore. "Now, then, you dogs!"—that's how he began with the men's delegates—"His Majesty will be graciously pleased to hear your grievances: and afterwards I'll be graciously pleased to hang the lot of you and rope-end every fifth man in the Fleet. That's plain sailing, I hope!" says he. The delegates made a rush at him, triced him up hand and foot, and in two two's would have heaved him to the fishes with an eighteen-pound shot for ballast if his boat's crew hadn't swarmed on by the chains and carried him off. After this he commanded a ship at Camperdown, and another at Copenhagen, and being a good fighter as well as a man of science, was chosen for Governor of New South Wales. He hadn't been forty-eight hours in the colony, I'm told, before the music began, and it ended with his being clapped into irons by the military and stuck in prison for two years to cool his heels. At last they took him out, put him on board a ship of war and played farewell to him on a brass band: and, by George, Sir, if he didn't fight with the captain of the ship all the way home, making claim that as senior in the service he ought to command her! By this time, as you may guess, there was nothing to be done with the fellow but make him an Admiral; and so they did; and as Admiral of the Blue he died in the year 'seventeen, only a couple of weeks ahead of my poor grandfather, that would have set it down to the finger of Providence if he'd only lived to hear the news.

Well, now, the time that Bligh came down to Helford was a few months before he sailed for Australia, and that will be a hundred years ago next summer: and I guess the reason of his coming was that the folks at the Admiralty couldn't stand him in London, the weather just then being sultry. So they pulled out a map and said, "This Helford looks a nice cool far-away place; let the man go down and take soundings and chart the place"; for Bligh, you must know, had been a pupil of Captain Cook's, and at work of this kind there was no man cleverer in the Navy.

To do him justice, Bligh never complained of work. So off he packed and started from London by coach in the early days of June; and with him there travelled down a friend of his, a retired naval officer by the name of Sharl, that was bound for Falmouth to take passage in the Lisbon packet; but whether on business or a pleasure trip is more than I can tell you.

So far as I know, nothing went wrong with them until they came to Torpoint Ferry: and there, on the Cornish side of the water, stood the Highflyer coach, the inside of it crammed full of parcels belonging to our Vicar's wife, Mrs. Polwhele, that always visited Plymouth once a year for a week's shopping. Having all these parcels to bring home, Mrs. Polwhele had crossed over by a waterman's boat two hours before, packed the coach as full as it would hold, and stepped into the Ferry Inn for a dish of tea. "And glad I am to be across the river in good time," she told the landlady; "for by the look of the sky there's a thunderstorm coming."

Sure enough there was, and it broke over the Hamoaze with a bang just as Captain Bligh and his friend put

across in the ferry-boat. The lightning whizzed, and the rain came down like the floods of Deva, and in five minutes' time the streets and gutters of Torpoint were pouring on to the Quay like so many shutes, and turning all the inshore water to the colour of pea-soup. Another twenty minutes and 'twas over; blue sky above and the birds singing, and the roof and trees all a-twinkle in the sun; and out steps Mrs. Polwhele very gingerly in the landlady's pattens, to find the Highflyer ready to start, the guard unlashing the tarpaulin that he'd drawn over the outside luggage, the horses steaming and anxious to be off, and on the box-seat a couple of gentlemen wet to the skin, and one of them looking as ugly as a chained dog in a street fight. This was Bligh, of course. His friend, Mr. Sharl, sat alongside, talking low and trying to coax him back to a good temper: but Mrs. Polwhele missed taking notice of this. She hadn't seen the gentlemen arrive, by reason that, being timid of thunder, at the very first peal she'd run upstair, and crawled under one of the bed-ties: and there she bided until the chambermaid brought word that the sky was clear and the coach waiting.

If ever you've had to do with timmersome folks I dare say you've noted how talkative they get as soon as danger's over. Mrs. Polwhele took a glance at the inside of the coach to make sure that her belongings were safe, and then, turning to the ladder that the Boots was holding for her to mount, up she trips to her outside place behind the box-seat, all in a fluff and commotion, and chattering so fast that the words hitched in each other like beer in a narrow-necked bottle.

"Give you good morning, gentlemen!" said Mrs. Polwhele, "and I do hope and trust I haven't kept you

waiting; but thunder makes me *that* nervous! 'Twas always the same with me from a girl; and la! what a storm while it lasted! I declare the first drops looked to me a'most so big as crown-pieces. Most unfortunate it should come on when you were crossing—most unfortunate, I vow! There's nothing so unpleasant as sitting in damp clothes, especially if you're not accustomed to it. My husband, now—if he puts on a shirt that hasn't been double-aired I always know what's going to happen: it'll be lumbago next day to a certainty. But maybe, as travellers, you're not so susceptible. I find hotel-keepers so careless with their damp sheets! May I ask, gentlemen, if you've come from far? You'll be bound for Falmouth, as I guess: and so am I. You'll find much on the way to admire. But perhaps this is not your first visit to Cornwall?"

In this fashion she was rattling away, good soul—settling her wraps about her and scarcely drawing breath—when Bligh slewed himself around in his seat, and for answer treated her to a long stare.

Now, Bligh wasn't a beauty at the best of times, and he carried a scar on his cheek that didn't improve matters by turning white when his face was red, and red when his face was white. They say the King stepped up to him at Court once and asked him how he came by it and in what action. Bligh had to tell the truth—that he'd got it in the orchard at home: he and his father were trying to catch a horse there: the old man flung a hatchet to turn the horse and hit his boy in the face, marking him for life. Hastiness, you see, in the family.

Well, the sight of his face, glowering back on her over his shoulder, was enough to dry up the speech

in Mrs. Polwhele or any woman. But Bligh, it seems, couldn't be content with this. After withering the poor soul for ten seconds or so, he takes his eyes off her, turns to his friend again in a lazy, insolent way, and begins to talk loud to him in French.

'Twas a terrible unmannerly thing to do for a fellow supposed to be a gentleman. I've naught to say against modern languages: but when I see it on the newspaper nowadays that naval officers ought to give what's called "increased attention" to French and German, I hope that they'll use it bettern than Bligh, that's all! Why, Sir, my eldest daughter threw up a situation as parlour-maid in London because her master and mistress pitched to parleyvooing whenever they wanted to talk secrets at table. "If you please, Ma'am," she told the lady, "you're mistaking me for the governess and I never could abide compliments." She gave a month's warning then and there, and I commend the girl's spirit.

But the awkward thing for Bligh, as it turned out, was that Mrs. Polwhele didn't understand his insolence. Being a woman that wouldn't hurt a fly if she could help it, and coming from a parish where every man, her husband included, took pleasure in treating her respectfully, she never dreamed that an affront was meant. From the moment she heard Bligh's lingo, she firmly believed that here were two Frenchies on the coach; and first she went white to the lips and shivered all over, and then she caught at the seat to steady herself, and then she flung back a look at Jim the Guard, to make sure he had his blunderbuss handy. She couldn't speak to Sammy Hosking, the coachman, or touch him by the arm without reaching across Bligh:

and by this time the horses were at the top of the hill and settling into a gallop. She thought of the many times she'd sat up in bed at home in a fright that the Frenchmen had landed and were marching up to burn Manaccan Vicarage: and how often she had warned her husband against abusing Boney from the pulpit—'twas dangerous, she always maintained, for a man living so nigh the seashore. The very shawl beside her was scarlet, same as the women-folk wore about the fields in those days in hopes that the invaders, if any came, would mistake them for red-coats. And here she was, perched up behind two of her country's enemies—one of them as ugly as Old Nick or Boney himself—and bowling down towards her peaceful home at anything from sixteen to eighteen miles an hour.

I dare say, too, the thunderstorm had given her nerves a shaking; at any rate, Jim the Guard came crawling over the coach-roof after a while, and, said he, "Why, Mrs. Polwhele, whatever is the matter? I han't heard you speak six words since we started."

And with that, just as he settled himself down for a comfortable chat with her, after his custom, the poor lady points to the two strangers, flings up both hands, and tumbles upon him in a fit of hysterics.

"Stop the hosses!" yells Jim; but already Sammy Hosking was pulling up for dear life at the sound of her screams.

"What in thunder's wrong with the female?" asks Bligh.

"Female yourself!" answers up Sammy in a pretty passion. "Mrs. Polwhele's a lady, and I reckon your cussed rudeness upset her. I say nothing of your face, for that you can't help."

Bligh started up in a fury, but Mr. Sharl pulled him down on the seat, and then Jim the Guard took a turn.

"Pitch a lady's luggage into the road, would you?" for this, you must know, was the reason of Bligh's sulkiness at starting. He had come up soaking from Torpoint Ferry, walked straight to the coach, and pulled the door open to jump inside, when down on his head came rolling a couple of Dutch cheeses that Mrs. Polwhele had crammed on the top of her belongings. This raised his temper, and he began to drag parcel after parcel out and fling them in the mud, shouting that no passenger had a right to fill up the inside of a coach in that fashion. Thereupon Jim sent an ostler running to the landlady that owned the High-flyer, and she told Bligh that he hadn't booked his seat yet: that the inside was reserved for Mrs. Polwhele: and that he could either take an outside place and behave himself, or be left behind to learn manners. For a while he showed fight: but Mr. Sharl managed to talk sense into him, and the parcels were stowed again and the door shut but a minute before Mrs. Polwhele came downstairs and took her seat as innocent as a lamb.

"Pitch a lady's luggage into the road, would you?" struck in Jim the Guard, making himself heard above the pillaloo. "Carry on as if the coach belonged to ye, hey? Come down and take your coat off, like a man, and don't sit there making fool faces at me!"

"My friend is not making faces," began Mr. Sharl, very gentle-like, trying to keep the peace.

"Call yourself his friend!" Jim snapped him up. "Get off, the pair of you. Friend indeed! Go and buy him a veil."

But 'twas easily seen that Mrs. Polwhele couldn't

be carried farther. So Sammy Hosking pulled up at a farmhouse a mile beyond St. Germans: and there she was unloaded, with her traps, and put straight to bed: and a farm-boy sent back to Torpoint to fetch a chaise for her as soon as she recovered. And the Highflyer—that had been delayed three-quarters of an hour—rattled off at a gallop, with all on board in the worst of tempers.

When they reached Falmouth—which was not till after ten o'clock at night—and drew up at the "Crown and Anchor," the first man to hail them was old Parson Polwhele, standing there under the lamp in the entry and taking snuff to keep himself awake.

"Well, my love," says he, stepping forward to help his wife down and give her a kiss. "And how have you enjoyed the journey?"

But instead of his wife 'twas a bull-necked-looking man that swung himself off the coach-roof, knocking the Parson aside, and bounced into the inn without so much as a "beg your pardon."

Parson Polwhele was taken aback for the moment by reason that he'd pretty nigh kissed the fellow by accident; and before he could recover, Jim the Guard leans out over the darkness, and, says he, speaking down: "Very sorry, Parson, but your missus wasn't taken very well t'other side of St. Germans, and we've been forced to leave her 'pon the road."

Now, the Parson doted on his wife, as well he might. He was a very learned man, you must know, and wrote a thundering great history of Cornwall: but outside of book-learning his head rambled terribly, and Mrs. Polwhele managed him in all the little business of life. "'Tis like looking after a museum," she used to declare.

"I don't understand the contents, I'm thankful to say; but, please God, I can keep 'em dusted." A better-suited couple you couldn't find, nor a more affectionate; and whenever Mrs. Polwhele tripped it to Plymouth, the Parson would be at Falmouth to welcome her back, and they'd sleep the night at the "Crown and Anchor" and drive home to Manaccan next morning.

"Not taken well?" cried the Parson. "Oh, my poor Mary—my poor, dear Mary!"

"'Tisn' so bad as all that," says Jim, as soothing as he could; but he thought it best to tell nothing about the rumpus.

"If 'tis on the wings of an eagle, I must fly to her!" cries the Parson, and he hurried indoors and called out for a chaise and pair.

He had some trouble in persuading a post-boy to turn out at such an hour, but before midnight the poor man was launched and rattling away eastward, chafing at the hills and singing out that he'd pay for speed, whatever it cost. And at Grampound in the grey of the morning he almost ran slap into a chaise and pair proceeding westward, and likewise as if its postilion wanted to break his neck.

Parson Polwhele stood up in his vehicle and looked out ahead. The two chaises had narrowly missed doubling each other into a cocked hat; in fact, the boys had pulled up within a dozen yards of smash, and there stood the horses face to face and steaming.

"Why, 'tis my Mary!" cries the Parson, and takes a leap out of the chaise.

"Oh, Richard! Richard!" sobs Mrs. Polwhele. "But you can't possibly come in here, my love," she went on, drying her eyes.

"Why not, my angel?"

"Because of the parcels, dearest. And Heaven only knows what's underneath me at this moment, but it feels like a flat-iron. Besides," says she, like the prudent woman she was, "we've paid for two chaises. But 'twas good of you to come in search of me, and I'll say what I've said a thousand times, that I've the best husband in the world."

The Parson grumbled a bit; but, indeed, the woman was piled about with packages up to the neck. So, very sad-like, he went back to his own chaise—that was now slewed about for Falmouth—and off the procession started at an easy trot, the good man bouncing up in his seat from time to time to blow back a kiss.

But after awhile he shouted to the post-boy to pull up again.

"What's the matter, love?" sings out Mrs. Polwhele, overtaking him and coming to a stand likewise.

"Why, it occurs to me, my angel, that *you* might get into *my* chaise, if you're not too tightly wedged."

"There's no saying what will happen when I once begin to move," said Mrs. Polwhele: "but I'll risk it. For I don't mind telling you that one of my legs went to sleep somewhere near St. Austell, and 'tis dreadfully uncomfortable."

So out she was fetched and climbed in beside her husband.

"But what was it that upset you?" he asked, as they started again.

Mrs. Polwhele laid her cheek to his shoulder and sobbed aloud; and so by degrees let out her story.

"But, my love, the thing's impossible!" cried Parson

Polwhele. "There's no Frenchman in Cornwall at this moment, unless maybe 'tis the Guernsey merchant [1] or some poor wretch of a prisoner escaped from the hulks in the Hamoaze."

"Then, that's what these men were, you may be sure," said Mrs. Polwhele.

"Tut-tut-tut! You've just told me that they came across the ferry, like any ordinary passengers."

"Did I? Then I told more than I know; for I never saw them cross."

"A couple of escaped prisoners wouldn't travel by coach in broad daylight, and talk French in everyone's hearing."

"We live in the midst of mysteries," said Mrs. Polwhele. "There's my parcels, now—I packed 'em in the Highflyer most careful, and I'm sure Jim the Guard would be equally careful in handing them out—you know the sort of man he is: and yet I find a good dozen of them plastered in mud, and my new Moldavia cap, that I gave twenty-three shillings for only last Tuesday, pounded to a jelly, quite as if someone had flung it on the road and danced on it!"

The poor soul burst out into fresh tears, and there against her husband's shoulder cried herself fairly asleep, being tired out with travelling all night. By and by the Parson, that wanted a nap just as badly, dozed off beside her: and in this fashion they were brought back through Falmouth streets and into the yard of the "Crown and Anchor," where Mrs. Polwhele woke up with a scream, crying out: "Prisoners or no prisoners, those men were up to no good: and I'll say it if I live to be a hundred!"

[1] Euphemistic for "smuggler's agent."

That same afternoon they transhipped the parcels into a cart, and drove ahead themselves in a light gig, and so came down, a little before sunset, to the "Passage Inn" yonder. There, of course, they had to unload again and wait for the ferry to bring them across to their own parish. It surprised the Parson a bit to find the ferry-boat lying ready by the shore and my grandfather standing there head to head with old Arch'laus Spry, that was constable of Mawnan parish.

"Hallo, Calvin!" the Parson sings out. "This looks bad—Mawnan and Manaccan putting their heads together. I hope there's nothing gone wrong since I've been away?"

"Aw, Parson dear," says my grandfather, "I'm glad you've come—yea, glad sure 'nuff. We've a-been enjoying a terrible time!"

"Then something *has* gone wrong?" says the Parson.

"As for that," my grandfather answers, "I only wish I could say yes or no: for 'twould be a relief even to know the worst." He beckoned very mysterious-like and led the Parson a couple of hundred yards up the foreshore, with Arch'laus Spry following. And there they came to a halt, all three, before a rock that someone had been daubing with whitewash. On the top of the cliff, right above, was planted a stick with a little white flag.

"Now, Sir, as a Justice of the Peace, what d'ee think of it?"

Parson Polwhele stared from the rock to the stick and couldn't say. So he turns to Arch'laus Spry and asks: "Any person taken ill in your parish?"

"No, Sir."

"You're sure Billy Johns hasn't been drinking again?"

Billy Johns was the landlord of the "Passage Inn," a very ordinary man by rule, but given to breaking loose among his own liquors. "He seemed all right yesterday when I hired the trap off him; but he does the most unaccountable things when he's taken bad."

"He never did anything so far out of nature as this here; and I can mind him in six outbreaks," answered my grandfather. "Besides, 'tis not Billy Johns nor anyone like him."

"Then you know who did it?"

"I do and I don't, Sir. But take a look round, if you please."

The Parson looked up and down and across the river; and, sure, enough, whichever way he turned, his eyes fell on splashes of whitewash and little flags fluttering. They seemed to stretch right away from Porthnavas down to the river's mouth; and though he couldn't see see it from where he stood, even Mawnan church-tower had been given a lick of the brush.

"But," said the Parson, fairly puzzled, "all this can only have happened in broad daylight, and you must have caught the fellow at it, whoever he is."

"I wouldn't go so far as to say I caught him," answered my grandfather, modest-like; "but I came upon him a little above Bosahan in the act of setting up one of his flags, and I asked him, in the King's name, what he meant by it."

"And what did he answer?"

My grandfather looked over his shoulder. "I couldn't, Sir, not for a pocketful of crowns, and your good lady, so to speak, within hearing."

"Nonsense, man! She's not within a hundred yards."

"Well, then, Sir, he up and hoped the devil would

fly away with me, and from that he went on to say——" But here my grandfather came to a dead halt. "No, Sir, I can't; and as a Minister of the Gospel, you'll never insist on it. He made such horrible statements that I had to go straight home and read over my old mother's marriage lines. It fairly dazed me to hear him talk so confident, and she in her grave, poor soul!"

"You ought to have demanded his name."

"I did, Sir; naturally I did. And he told me to go to the naughty place for it."

"Well, but what like is he?"

"Oh, as to that, Sir, a man of ordinary shape, like yourself, in a plain blue coat and a wig shorter than ordinary; nothing about him to prepare you for the language he lets fly."

"And," put in Arch'laus Spry, "he's taken lodgings down to Durgan with the Widow Polkinghorne, and eaten his dinner—a fowl and a jug of cider with it. After dinner he hired Robin's boat and went for a row. I thought it my duty, as he was pushing off, to sidle up in a friendly way. I said to him, 'The weather, Sir, looks nice and settled': that is what I said, neither more nor less, but using those very words. What d'ee think he answered? He said, 'That's capital, my man: now go along and annoy somebody else.' Wasn't that a disconnected way of talking? If you ask my opinion, putting two and two together, I say he's most likely some poor wandering loonatic."

The evening was dusking down by this time, and Parson Polwhele, though a good bit puzzled, called to mind that his wife would be getting anxious to cross the ferry and reach home before dark: so he determined that nothing could be done before morning,

when he promised Arch'laus Spry to look into the matter. My grandfather he took across in the boat with him, to look after the parcels and help them up to the Vicarage: and on the way they talked about a grave that my grandfather had been digging—he being sexton and parish clerk, as well as constable and the Parson's right-hand man, as you might call it, in all public matters.

While they discoursed, Mrs. Polwhele was taking a look about her to make sure the country hadn't altered while she was away at Plymouth. And by and by she cries out:

"Why, my love, whatever are these dabs o' white stuck up and down the foreshore?"

The Parson takes a look at my grandfather before answering: "My angel, to tell you the truth, that's more than we know."

"Richard, you're concealing something from me," said Mrs. Polwhele. "If the French have landed and I'm going home to be burnt in my bed, it shall be with my eyes open."

"My dear Mary," the Parson argued, "you've a-got the French on your brain. If the French landed they wouldn't begin by sticking dabs of whitewash all over the parish; now, would they?"

"How in the world should I know what a lot of Papists would do or not do?" she answered. "'Tis no more foolish to my mind than eating frogs or kissing a man's toe."

Well, say what the Parson would, the notion had fixed itself in the poor lady's head. Three times that night she woke in the bed with her curl-papers crackling for very fright; and the fourth time 'twas at the sound

of a real dido below stairs. Some person was down by the back door knocking and rattling upon it with all his might.

The sun had been up for maybe an hour—the time of year, as I told you, being near about mid-summer—and the Parson, that never wanted for pluck, jumped out and into his breeches in a twinkling, while his wife pulled the counterpane over her head. Down along the passage he skipped to a little window opening over the back porch.

"Who's there!" he called, and out from the porch stepped my grandfather, that had risen early and gone to the churchyard to finish digging the grave before breakfast. "Why, what on the earth is wrong with ye? I made sure the French had landed, at the least."

"Couldn't be much worse if they had," said my grandfather. "Some person 've a-stole my shovel, pick, and biddicks."

"Nonsense!" said the Parson.

"The corpse won't find it nonsense, Sir, if I don't get 'em back in time. I left 'em lying, all three, at the bottom of the grave overnight."

"And now they're missing?"

"Not a trace of 'em to be seen."

"Someone has been playing you a practical joke, Calvin. Here, stop a moment——" The Parson ran back to his room, fetched a key, and flung it out into the yard. "That'll unlock the tool-shed in the garden. Get what you want, and we'll talk about the theft after breakfast. How soon will the grave be ready?"

"I can't say sooner than ten o'clock after what has happened."

"Say ten o'clock, then. This is Saturday, and I've my sermon to prepare after breakfast. At ten o'clock I'll join you in the churchyard."

II

My grandfather went off to unlock the tool-shed, and the Parson back to comfort Mrs. Polwhele—which was no easy matter. "There's something wrong with the parish since I've been away, and that you can't deny," she declared. "It don't feel like home any longer, and my poor flesh is shivering like a jelly, and my hand almost too hot to make the butter." She kept up this lidden all through breakfast, and the meal was no sooner cleared away than she slipped on a shawl and stepped across to the churchyard to discuss the robbery.

The Parson drew a chair to the window, lit his pipe, and pulled out his pocket-Bible to choose a text for his next day's sermon. But he couldn't fix his thoughts. Try how he would, they kept harking back to his travels in the post-chaise, and his wife's story, and those unaccountable flags and splashes of whitewash. His pipe went out, and he was getting up to find a light for it, when just at that moment the garden gate rattled, and, looking down the path towards the sound, his eyes fell on a square-cut, fierce-looking man in blue, standing there with a dirty bag in one hand and a sheaf of tools over his right shoulder.

The man caught sight of the Parson at the window, and set down his tools inside the gate—shovel and pick and biddicks.

"Good-mornin'! I may come inside, I suppose?"

says he, in a gruff tone of voice. He came up the path and the Parson unlatched the window, which was one of the long sort reaching down to the ground.

"My name's Bligh," said the visitor, gruff as before. "You're the Parson, eh? Bit of an antiquarian, I'm given to understand? These things ought to be in your line, then, and I hope they are not broken: I carried them as careful as I could." He opened the bag and emptied it out upon the table—an old earthenware pot, a rusted iron ring, four or five burnt bones, and a handful or so of ashes. "Human, you see," said he, picking up one of the bones and holding it under the Parson's nose. "One of your ancient Romans, no doubt."

"Ancient Romans? Ancient Romans?" stammered Parson Polwhele. "Pray, Sir, where did you get these —these articles?"

"By digging for them, Sir; in a mound just outside that old Roman camp of yours."

"Roman camp? There's no Roman camp within thirty miles of us as the crow flies: and I doubt if there's one within fifty!"

"Shows how much you know about it. That's what I complain about in you parsons: never glimpse a thing that's under your noses. Now, I come along, making no pretence to be an antiquarian, and the first thing I see out on your headland yonder, is a Roman camp, with a great mound beside it——"

"No such thing, Sir!" the Parson couldn't help interrupting.

Bligh stared at him for a moment, like a man hurt in his feelings but keeping hold on his Christian compassion. "Look here," he said; "you mayn't know

it, but I'm a bad man to contradict. This here Roman camp, as I was sayin'——"

"If you mean Little Dinnis Camp, Sir, 'tis as round as my hat."

"Damme, if you interrupt again—— "

"But I will. Here, in my own parlour, I tell you that Little Dinnis is as round as my hat!"

"All right; don't lose your temper, shouting out what I never denied. Round or square, it don't matter a ha'porth to me. This here round Roman camp——"

"But I tell you, once more, there's no such thing!" cried the Parson, stamping his foot. "The Romans never made a round camp in their lives. Little Dinnis is British; the encampment's British; the mound, as you call it, is a British barrow; and as for you——"

"As for me," thunders Bligh, "I'm British too, and don't you forget it. Confound you, Sir! What the devil do I care for your pettifogging bones? I'm a British sailor, Sir; I come to your God-forsaken parish on a Government job, and I happen on a whole shopful of ancient remains. In pure kindness—pure kindness, mark you—I interrupt my work to dig 'em up; and this is all the thanks I get!"

"Thanks!" fairly yelled the Parson. "You ought to be horsewhipped, rather, for disturbing an ancient tomb that's been the apple of my eye ever since I was inducted to this parish!" Then, as Bligh drew back, staring: "My poor barrow!" he went on; "my poor, ransacked barrow! But there may be something to save yet——" and he fairly ran for the door, leaving Bligh at a standstill.

For awhile the man stood there like a fellow in a trance, opening and shutting his mouth, with his eyes

set on the doorway where the Parson had disappeared. Then, his temper overmastering him, with a sweep of his arm he sent the whole bag of tricks flying on to the floor, kicked them to right and left through the garden, slammed the gate, pitched across the road, and flung through the churchyard towards the river like a whirlwind.

Now, while this was happening, Mrs. Polwhele had picked her way across the churchyard, and after chatting a bit with my grandfather over the theft of his tools, had stepped into the church to see that the place, and especially the table and communion-rails and the parsonage pew, was neat and dusted, this being her regular custom after a trip to Plymouth. And no sooner was she within the porch than who should come dandering along the road but Arch'laus Spry. The road, as you know, goes downhill after passing the parsonage gate, and holds on round the churchyard wall like a sunk way, the soil inside being piled up to the wall's coping. But, my grandfather being still behindhand with his job, his head and shoulders showed over the grave's edge. So Arch'laus Spry caught sight of him.

"Why, you're the very man I was looking for," says Arch'laus, stopping.

"Death halts for no man," answers my grandfather, shovelling away.

"That furrin' fellow is somewhere in this neighbourhood at this very moment," says Arch'laus, wagging his head. "I saw his boat moored down by the Passage as I landed. And I've a-got something to report. He was up and off by three o'clock this morning, and knocked up the Widow Polkinghorne, trying to borrow a pick and shovel."

"Pick and shovel!" My grandfather stopped working and slapped his thigh. "Then he's the man that 've walked off with mine: and a biddicks too."

"He said nothing of a biddicks, but he's quite capable of it."

"Surely in the midst of life we are in death," said my grandfather. "I was al'ays inclined to believe that text, and now I'm sure of it. Let's go and see the Parson."

He tossed his shovel on to the loose earth above the grave and was just about to scramble out after it when the churchyard gate shook on its hinges and across the path and by the church porch went Bligh, as I've said, like a whirlwind. Arch'laus Spry, that had pulled his chin up level with the coping, ducked at the sight of him, and even my grandfather clucked down a little in the grave as he passed.

"The very man!" said Spry, under his breath.

"The wicked flee, whom no man pursueth," said my grandfather, looking after the man; but Bligh turned his head neither to the right hand nor to the left.

"Oh—oh—oh!" squealed a voice inside the church.

"Whatever was *that*," cries Arch'laus Spry, giving a jump. They both stared at the porch.

"Oh—oh—oh!" squealed the voice again.

"It certainly comes from inside," said Arch'laus Spry.

"It's Mrs. Polwhele!" said my grandfather; "and by the noise of it she's having hysterics."

And with that he scrambled up and ran; and Spry heaved himself over the wall and followed. And there, in the south aisle, they found Mrs. Polwhele lying back in a pew and kicking like a stallion in a loose-box.

My grandfather took her by the shoulders, while

Spry ran for the jug of holy water that stood by the font. As it happened, 'twas empty: but the sight of it fetched her to, and she raised herself up with a shiver.

"The Frenchman!" she cries out, pointing. "The Frenchman—on the coach! O Lord, deliver us!"

For a moment, as you'll guess, my grandfather was puzzled: but he stared where the poor lady pointed, and after a bit he began to understand. I dare say you've seen our church, Sir, and if so, you must have taken note of a monstrous fine fig-tree growing out of the south wall—"the marvel of Manaccan," we used to call it. When they restored the church the other day nobody had the heart to destroy the tree, for all the damage it did to the building—having come there the Lord knows how, and grown there since the Lord knows when. So they took and patched up the wall around it, and there it thrives. But in the times I'm telling of, it had split the wall so that from inside you could look straight through the crack into the churchyard; and 'twas to this crack that Mrs. Polwhele's finger pointed.

"Eh?" said my grandfather. "The furriner [1] that went by just now, was it he that frightened ye, Ma'am?"

Mrs. Polwhele nodded.

"But what put it into your head that he's a Frenchman?"

"Because French is his language. With these very ears I heard him talk it! He joined the coach at Torpoint, and when I spoke him fair in honest English not a word could he answer me. Oh, Calvin, Calvin! what have I done—a poor weak woman—to be mixed up in these plots and invasions?"

[1] In Cornwall a "foreigner" is anyone from east of the Tamar.

But my grandfather couldn't stop to answer that question, for a terrible light was breaking in upon him. "A Frenchman?" he called out. "And for these twenty-four hours he's been marking out the river and taking soundings!" He glared at Arch'laus Spry, and Arch'laus dropped the brazen ewer upon the pavement and smote his forehead. "The Devil," says he, "is among us, having great wrath!"

"And for aught we know," says my grandfather, speaking in a slow and fearsome whisper, "the French ships may be hanging off the coast while we'm talking here!"

"You don't mean to tell us," cried Mrs. Polwhele, sitting up stiff in the pew, "that this man has been mapping out the river under your very noses!"

"He has, Ma'am. Oh, I see it all! What likelier place could they choose on the whole coast? And from here to Falmouth what is it but a step?"

"Let them that be in Judæa flee to the mountains," said Arch'laus Spry solemn-like.

"And me just home from Plymouth with a fine new roasting-jack!" chimed in Mrs. Polwhele. "As though the day of wrath weren't bad enough without *that* waste o' money! Run, Calvin—run and tell the Vicar this instant—no, no, don't leave me behind! Take me home, that's a good man: else I shall faint at my own shadow!"

Well, they hurried off to the Vicarage: but, of course, there was no Parson to be found, for by this time he was half-way towards Little Dinnis, and running like a madman under the hot sun to see what damage had befallen his dearly-loved camp. The servants hadn't seen him leave the house; ne'er a word could they tell

of him except that Martha, the cook, when she cleared away the breakfast things, had left him seated in his chair and smoking.

"But what's the meaning of this?" cried out Mrs. Polwhele, pointing to the tablecloth that Bligh had pulled all awry in his temper. "And the window open too!"

"And—hallo!" says my grandfather, staring across the patch of turf outside. "Surely here's signs of a violent struggle. Human, by the look of it," says he, picking up a thigh-bone and holding it out towards Mrs. Polwhele.

She began to shake like a leaf. "Oh, Calvin!" she gasps out. "Oh, Calvin, not in this short time —it couldn't be!"

"Charred, too," says my grandfather, inspecting it: and with that they turned at a cry from Martha the cook, that was down on hands and knees upon the carpet.

"Ashes! See here, mistress—ashes all over your best carpet!"

The two women stared at the fireplace: but, of course, that told them nothing, being empty, as usual at the time of year, with only a few shavings stuck about it by way of ornament. Martha, the first to pick up her wits, dashed out into the front hall.

"Gone without his hat, too!" she fairly screamed, running her eye along the row of pegs.

Mrs. Polwhele clasped her hands. "In the midst of life we are in death," said Arch'laus Spry: "that's my opinion if you ask it."

"Gone! Gone without his hat, like the snuff of a candle!" Mrs. Polwhele dropped into a chair and rocked herself and moaned.

My grandfather banged his fist on the table. He never could abide the sight of a woman in trouble.

"Missus," says he, "if the Parson's anywhere alive, we'll find 'en: and if that Frenchman be Old Nick himself, he shall rue the day he ever set foot in Manaccan parish! Come'st along, Arch'laus——"

He took Spry by the arm and marched him out and down the garden path. There, by the gate, what should his eyes light upon but his own stolen tools! But by this time all power of astonishment was dried up within him. He just raised his eyes aloft, as much as to say, "Let the sky open and rain miracles!" and then and there he saw, coming down the road, the funeral that both he and the Parson had clean forgotten.

The corpse was an old man called 'Pollas Hockaday; and Sam Trewhella, a fish-curer that had married Hockaday's eldest daughter, walked next behind the coffin as chief mourner. My grandfather waited by the gate for the procession to come by, and with that Trewhella caught sight of him, and, says he, taking down the handkerchief from his nose:

"Well, you're a pretty fellow, I must say! What in thunder d'ee mean by not tolling the minute-bell?"

"Tak 'en back," answers my grandfather, pointing to the coffin. "Take 'en back, 'co!"

"Eh?" says Trewhella. "Answer my question, I tell 'ee. You've hurt my feelings and the feelings of everyone connected with the deceased: and if this weren't not-azackly the place for it, I'd up and give you a dashed good hiding," says he.

"Aw, take 'en back," my grandfather goes on. "Take 'en back, my dears, and put 'en somewhere, cool and temporary! The grave's not digged, and the Parson's

kidnapped, and the French be upon us, and down by the river ther's a furrin spy taking soundings at this moment! In the name of King George," said he, remembering that he was constable, "I command you all except the females to come along and collar 'en!"

While this was going on, Sir, Bligh had found his boat—which he'd left by the shore—and was pulling up the river to work off his rage. Ne'er a thought had he, as he flounced through the churchyard, of the train of powder he dribbled behind him: but all the way he blew off steam, cursing Parson Polwhele and the whole cloth from Land's End to Johnny Groats, and glowering at the very gates by the road as though he wanted to kick 'em to relieve his feelings. But when he reached his boat and began rowing, by little and little the exercise tamed him. With his flags and whitewash he'd marked out most of the lines he wanted for soundings: but there were two creeks he hadn't yet found time to explore—Porthnavas, on the opposite side, and the very creek by which we're sitting. So, as he came abreast of this one, he determined to have a look at it; and after rowing a hundred yards or so, lay on his oars, lit his pipe, and let his boat drift up with the tide.

The creek was just the same lonesome place that it is to-day, the only difference being that the pallace [1] at the entrance had a roof on it then, and was rented by Sam Trewhella—the same that followed old Hockaday's coffin, as I've told you. But above the pallace the woods grew close to the water's edge, and lined both shores with never a clearing till you reached the end, where the cottage stands now and the stream

[1] Fish-store.

comes down beside it: in those days there wasn't any cottage, only a piece of swampy ground. I don't know that Bligh saw much in the scenery, but it may have helped to soothe his mind: for by and by he settled himself on the bottom-boards, lit another pipe, pulled his hat over his nose, and lay there blinking at the sky, while the boat drifted up, hitching sometimes in a bough and sometimes floating broadside-on to the current, until she reached this bit of marsh and took the mud very gently.

After a while, finding she didn't move, Bligh lifted his head for a look about him and found that he'd come to the end of the creek. He put out a hand and felt the water, that was almost luke-warm with running over the mud. The trees shut him in; not a living soul was in sight; and by the quietness he might have been a hundred miles from anywhere. So what does my gentleman do but strip himself for a comfortable bathe.

He folded his clothes very neatly in the stern-sheets, waded out across the shallows as naked as a babe, and took to the water with so much delight that after a minute or so he must needs lie on his back and kick. He splashed away, one leg after the other, with his face turned towards the shore, and was just on the point of rolling over for another swim, when, as he lifted a leg for one last kick, his eyes fell on the boat. And there on the top of his clothes, in the stern of her, sat my grandfather sucking a pipe.

Bligh let down his legs and stood up, touching bottom, but neck-deep in water.

"Hi, you there!" he sings out.

"Wee, wee, parleyvou!" my grandfather answers, making use of pretty well all the French he knew.

"Confound you, Sir, for an impident dirty dog! What in the name of jiminy"—I can't give you, Sir, the exact words, for my grandfather could never be got to repeat 'em—"What in the name of jiminy d'ee mean by sitting on my clothes!"

"Wee, wee," my grandfather took him up, calm as you please. "You shocked me dreadful yesterday with your blasphemious talk: but now, seeing 'tis French, I don't mind so much. Take your time: but when you come out you go to prison. Wee, wee—preeson," says my grandfather.

"Are you drunk?" yells Bligh. "Get off my clothes this instant, you hobnailed son of a something-or-other!" And he began striding for shore.

"In the name of His Majesty King George the Third I charge you to come along quiet," says my grandfather, picking up a stretcher.

Bligh, being naked and unarmed, casts a look round for some way to help himself. He was a plucky fellow enough in a fight, as I've said: but I leave you to guess what he felt like when to right and left of him the bushes parted, and forth stepped half a dozen men in black suits with black silk weepers a foot and a half wide tied in great bunches round their hats. These were Sam Trewhella, of course, and the rest of the funeral-party, that had left the coffin in a nice shady spot inside the Vicarage garden gate, and come along to assist the law. They had brought along pretty nearly all the menkind of the parish beside: but these, being in their work-a-day clothes, didn't appear, and for a reason you'll learn by and by. All that Bligh saw was this dismal company of mourners backed by a rabble of school-children, the little ones lining the

shore and staring at him fearsomely with their fingers in their mouths.

For the moment Bligh must have thought himself dreaming. But there they stood, the men in black and the crowd of children, and my grandfather with the stretcher ready, and the green woods so quiet all round. And there he stood up to the ribs in water, and the tide and his temper rising.

"Look here, you something-or-other yokels," he called out, "if this is one of your village jokes, I promise you shall smart for it. Leave the spot this moment, fetch that idiot out of the boat, and take away the children. I want to dress, and it isn't decent!"

"Mounseer," answers my grandfather, "I dare say you've a-done it for your country; but we've a-caught you, and now you must go to prison—wee, wee, to preeson," he says, lisping it in a Frenchified way so as to make himself understood.

Bligh began to foam. "The longer you keep up this farce, my fine fellows, the worse you'll smart for it! There's a Magistrate in this parish, as I happen to know."

"There *was*," said my grandfather; "but we've strong reasons to believe he's been made away with."

"The only thing we could find of 'en," put in Arch'-laus Spry, "was a shin-bone and a pint of ashes. I don't know if the others noticed it, but to my notion there was a sniff of brimstone about the premises; and I've always been remarkable for my sense of smell."

"You won't deny," my grandfather went on, "that you've been making a map of this here river; for here it is in your tail-coat pocket."

"You insolent ruffian, put that down at once! I tell you that I'm a British officer and a gentleman!"

"*And* a Papist," went on my grandfather, holding up a ribbon with a bullet threaded to it. ('Twas the bullet Bligh used to weigh out allowances with on his voyage in the open boat after the mutineers had turned him adrift from the *Bounty*, and he wore it ever after.) "See here, friends: did you ever know an honest Protestant to wear such a thing about him inside his clothes?"

"Whether you're a joker or a numskull is more than I can fathom," says Bligh; "but for the last time I warn you I'm a British officer, and you'll go to jail for this as sure as eggs."

"The question is, Will you surrender and come along quiet?"

"No, I won't," says Bligh, sulky as a bear; "not if I stay here all night!"

With that my grandfather gave a wink to Sam Trewhella, and Sam Trewhella gave a whistle, and round the point came Trewhella's sean-boat that the village lads had fetched out and launched from his store at the mouth of the creek. Four men pulled her with all their might; in the stern stood Trewhella's foreman, Jim Bunt, with his two-hundred-fathom net: and along the shore came running the rest of the lads to see the fun.

"Heva, heva!" yelled Sam Trewhella, waving his hat with the black streamers.

The sean-boat swooped up to Bligh with a rush, and then, just as he faced upon it with his fists up, to die fighting, it swerved off on a curve round him, and Jim Bunt began shooting the sean hand over hand like lightning. Then the poor man understood, and having no mind to be rolled up and afterwards tucked in a

sean-net, he let out an oath, ducked his head, and broke for the shore like a bull. But 'twas no manner of use. As soon as he touched land a dozen jumped for him and pulled him down. They handled him as gentle as they could, for he fought with fists, legs, and teeth, and his language was awful: but my grandfather in his foresight had brought along a couple of wainropes, and within ten minutes they had my gentleman trussed, heaved him into the boat, covered him over, and were rowing him off and down the creek to land him at Helford Quay.

By this 'twas past noon; and at one o'clock, or a little before, Parson Polwhele come striding along home from Little Dinnis. He had tied a handkerchief about his head to keep off the sun; his hands and knees were coated with earth; and he sweated like a furze-bush in a mist, for the footpath led through cornfields and the heat was something terrible. Moreover, he had just called the funeral to mind; and this and the damage he'd left at Little Dinnis fairly hurried him into a fever.

But worse was in store. As he drew near the Parsonage, he spied a man running towards him: and behind the man the most dreadful noises were sounding from the house. The Parson came to a halt and swayed where he stood.

"Oh, Calvin! Calvin!" he cried—for the man running was my grandfather—"don't try to break it gently, but let me know the worst!"

"Oh, blessed day! Oh, fearful and yet blessed day!" cries my grandfather, almost catching him in both arms. "So you're not dead! So you're not dead, the Lord be praised, but only hurt!"

"Hurt?" says the Parson. "Not a bit of it—or only in my feelings. Oh, 'tis the handkerchief you're looking at? I put that up against sunstroke. But whatever do these dreadful sounds mean? Tell me the worst, Calvin, I implore you!"

"Oh, as for that," says my grandfather cheerfully, "the Frenchman's the worst by a long way—not but what your good lady made noise enough when she thought you'd been made away with: and afterwards, when she went upstairs and, taking a glance out of window, spied a long black coffin laid out under the lilac bushes, I'm told you could hear her a mile away. But she've been weakening this half-hour: her nature couldn't keep it up: whereas the longer we keep that Frenchman, the louder he seems to bellow."

"Heaven defend us, Calvin!"—the Parson's eyes fairly rolled in his head—"are you gone clean crazed? Frenchman! What Frenchman?"

"The same that frightened Mrs. Polwhele, Sir, upon the coach. We caught him drawing maps of the river, and very nigh tucked him in Sam Trewhella's sean: and now he's in your tool-shed right and tight, and here's the key, Sir, making so bold, that you gave me this morning. But I didn't like to take him into the house, with your good lady tumbling out of one fit into another. Hark to 'en, now! Would you ever believe one man could make such a noise?"

"Fits! My poor, dear, tender Mary having fits!" The Parson broke away for the house and dashed upstairs three steps at a time: and when she caught sight of him, Mrs. Polwhele let out a louder squeal than ever. But the next moment she was hanging round his neck, and laughing and sobbing by turns. And how long

they'd have clung to one another there's no knowing, if it hadn't been for the language pouring from the tool-shed.

"My dear," said the Parson, holding himself up and listening. "I don't think that can possibly be a Frenchman. He's too fluent."

Mrs. Polwhele listened too, but after a while she was forced to cover her face with both hands. "Oh, Richard, I've often heard 'en described as gay, but—but they can't surely be so gay as all that!"

The Parson eased her into an armchair and went downstairs to the courtyard, and there, as you may suppose, he found the parish gathered.

"Stand back all of you," he ordered. "I've a notion that some mistake has been committed: but you had best hold yourselves ready in case the prisoner tries to escape."

"But Parson dear, you're never going to unlock that door!" cried my grandfather.

"If you'll stand by me, Calvin," says the Parson, plucky as ginger, and up he steps to the very door, all the parish holding its breath.

He tapped once—no answer: twice—and no more answer than before. There was a small trap open in the roof and through this the language kept pouring with never a stop, only now and then a roar like a bull's. But at the third knock it died down to a sort of rumbling, and presently came a shout, "Who's there?"

"A clergyman and justice of the peace," answers the Parson.

"I'll have your skin for this!"

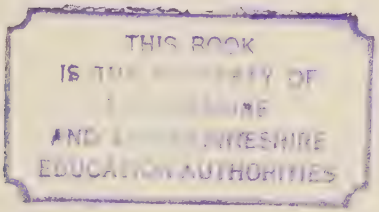
"But you'll excuse me——"

"I'll have your skin for this, and your blood in a

bottle! I'm a British officer and a gentleman, and I'll have you stuffed and put in a glass case, as sure as my name's Bligh!"

"Bligh?" says the Parson, opening the door. "Any relation to the Blighs of St. Tudy? Oh, no it can't be!" he stammered, taken all aback to see the man stark naked on the threshold. "Why—why, you're the gentleman that called this morning!" he went on, the light breaking in upon him: "excuse me, I recognise you by—by the slight scar on your face."

Well, Sir, there was nothing for Bligh to do—the whole parish staring at him—but to slip back into the shed and put on the clothes my grandfather handed in at the door: and while he was dressing the whole truth came out. I won't say that he took the Parson's explanations in a nice spirit: for he vowed to have the law on everyone concerned. But that night he walked back to Falmouth and took the London coach. As for Helford River, 'twasn't charted that year nor for a score of years after. And now you know how this creek came by its name; and I'll say again, as I began, that a bad temper is an affliction, whoever owns it.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